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**THREE HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS' CONCEPTIONS OF THE FRENCH  
THEY TEACH**

**A DISSERTATION**

submitted by

**PATRICK R. MORAN**

In partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Mine is the only name that appears on the title page, but many people helped me in all phases of this study.

Above all, I would like to acknowledge the three teachers who participated in this study. I greatly appreciated their willingness to openly share their thoughts, feelings, and experiences. It was a privilege to enter their worlds and to hear their stories. I have a renewed respect and admiration for the challenging work of high school foreign language teachers.

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## **ABSTRACT**

In its quest to make foreign language learning relevant and attainable for all students, the foreign language education profession has made recommendations based on its search for the ideal language teaching methodology, on its research on the language learner and language acquisition, and on its reconceptualizations of the subject matter of language and culture. These recommendations represent conceptions of foreign language as subject matter. As such, they presume an understanding of what it means for foreign language teachers to know and teach foreign languages. In fact, the profession knows little about foreign language teachers' perceptions of the languages they teach. Very little research on foreign language teachers' understandings of their subject matter has been carried out.

The purpose of this study was to understand foreign language teachers' own perspectives of their subject matter. It consists of case studies of three experienced high school French teachers' conceptions of the French they teach in their respective schools in New England, drawn from in-depth interviews. The case studies are presented as detailed narrative accounts that describe these teachers' personal histories as language learners and teachers, their teaching situations during this study, and their views of their subject matter, French.

Findings in this study suggest that these teachers' conceptions of French are interconnected with their conceptions of teacher roles, students, curriculum, and of the context--the language department and their colleagues, the school, and the community. Findings further suggest that these teachers organize this interconnectedness through their conception of a working relationship with students based on learning French in their respective schools.





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## INTRODUCTION

... learning French...I think language--language learning--can easily have a stigma. It can be deadly. You know, grammatical, and boring, and all that stuff. Or it can be just like the most fascinating thing. -- Carl Harvey

Carl Harvey, high school French teacher, contrasted two views of his subject matter in these opposing terms. French, learning French, can either be "deadly" or "the most fascinating thing." Carl, one of three teachers in this study, drew this distinction in our first interview to help me see how he thought about teaching French, about students, and about their experiences learning French in his classes.

Carl, of course, is right. Foreign language study can be deadly. In the foreign language teaching profession, it is common to hear many former high school foreign language students describe their language learning experience in negative terms, and themselves as poor language learners. These three teachers were no exception. Susan Winston heard the ineffectiveness expressed as: "So many people would say, 'Oh I took four years. I don't know a word of it.'" Molly Evans heard former students' strong emotions: "Oh God, I took that in high school and I hated it!"

It did not take me long to discover that Carl's conception was much more textured and colorful than this flat, two-toned opposition of deadly and fascinating. I found the same kind of texture and color in the accounts of the other non-native high school French teachers in this study, Molly Evans and Susan Winston. Indeed, the texture and the color became the focus of this study. These three teachers' stories of their conceptions of teaching French in three New England high schools are the subject of this dissertation.

In the field of foreign language education in the United States, educators are clearly committed to making language learning less deadly and more fascinating. Much has been written concerning what foreign language teachers need to know, do, and think



in order to make languages and language learning relevant and interesting for students.

Prescriptions for improving foreign language education and foreign language teachers abound. Among the most recent are the professional standards for foreign language education, Standards for Foreign Language Learning: Preparing for the 21st Century (Phillips, 1996), a landmark document which has great implications for foreign language teachers. Likewise, in the field of foreign language teacher education, documents produced by the major professional organizations in the field include efforts to establish standards and guidelines for education and training of foreign language teachers (Murphy, 1989; AATSP, 1990; Shulz, 1993). These latter recommendations are comprehensive, and spell out in detail the competencies that teachers of particular foreign languages ought to attain, with special attention to language proficiency and cultural competence, as most foreign language teachers in the U.S. are not native speakers of the languages they teach. In addition, there are also recommendations on the organization and delivery of foreign language teacher education (Richards, 1987; Lange, 1990; Omaggio, 1987; Tedick & Walker, 1996) intended to help teachers learn target competencies.

All these recommendations are based on views of the nature of language and culture, language learning, language teaching methodologies, and the role of foreign language education in the U.S. These views all represent conceptions of foreign language as subject matter. As such, they presume an understanding of what it means for foreign language teachers to know and teach foreign languages.

In fact, the profession knows little about foreign language teachers' perceptions of the languages they teach. Very little research on foreign language teachers' understandings of their subject matter has been carried out. We know little about foreign language teachers themselves, what they actually know, do, and how they think about the languages they teach.

To find research that examines teachers' perspectives on subject matter, we need to look outside the foreign language profession to the field of teacher thinking, a relatively new field of educational research that seeks to understand teaching from the teacher's perspective. To date, research on teachers' subject matter knowledge





has concentrated on subject matters, such as mathematics, science, and literature, not foreign languages.

The present study contributes to research on teacher thinking by examining teachers of foreign language. It concentrates on this question: How do three high school French teachers conceive of the French they teach? It tells the stories of high school French teachers in three New England public schools: Susan Winston, Molly Evans, and Carl Harvey<sup>1</sup>. It tells of their backgrounds and experiences learning and teaching French, and their views of teaching French to students in their schools and communities.

The stories, presented as narrative accounts, are the heart of this study. In the sections preceding the accounts, I will describe the research context in which this study is situated, and the research methods I used. Following the narrative accounts, I describe the findings of this study, and discuss implications for further research, foreign language education, and foreign language teacher education.

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<sup>1</sup> Pseudonyms.





## CHAPTER ONE

### RESEARCH CONTEXT

In this chapter, I explain the research context in which this study is situated and its contribution to these research efforts, the theoretical frameworks that inform this study, and the sources of this study in my own experiences as a language educator.

#### **Research Context**

This study lies within the field of teacher thinking research, a field of inquiry which seeks to understand teaching from the teacher's perspective. It began in 1975 as a cognitive response to the widespread behaviorist emphasis in research on teaching. Teacher thinking research focused instead on "what goes on inside teacher's heads" (Shavelson & Stern, 1981). Since then, a number of research emphases have emerged within this field, each a reflection of teachers' "mental lives." Because of the interest in obtaining teachers' views of their own work, much of this research has utilized qualitative methods.

The particular emphasis that relates to this study is "teachers' subject matter knowledge" (Kennedy, 1990; Brophy, 1993), which seeks to understand teachers' perspectives on the subjects that they teach and the influence of these perspectives on their teaching. This is a relatively new area of research in this field, having emerged only in the last decade. Its emergence is usually associated with Shulman's naming it as "the missing paradigm" (1986) in research on teachers' thought processes. Up until this time, researchers had tended to concentrate on generic dimensions of teacher knowledge and thinking, such as information-processing, planning, and decision-making, without specific attention to what teachers were teaching.

To date, research on teachers' subject matter knowledge has concentrated primarily on teachers of mathematics (Ball, 1988; McDiarmid & Ball, 1989; Leinhardt & Smith, 1985), history (Wineburg & Wilson, 1991), science (Carlsen, 1991), and literature (Gudmundsdottir, 1991; Grossman, 1989, 1991). Very few studies have been conducted on foreign language teachers' thought processes. Those that have been



done examined teachers' discourse patterns (Freeman 1990) as applied from a teacher education course work or teachers' "knowledge growth" through a practicum experience (Almarza 1996).

Research in this area is still in the exploratory phase. However, findings do indicate that teachers' subject matter knowledge is multi-dimensional. These dimensions involve teachers' cognitive knowledge of their subject, their personal rapport with the subject, and their understandings of teaching this subject to students in their schools. As I read the research, there are three central aspects of this multi-dimensionality: 1) the nature of subject matter knowledge; 2) teaching and subject matter knowledge; 3) models of organization of subject matter knowledge.

### 1. The nature of subject matter knowledge

Researchers have found that teachers' knowledge of their subject is more than just cognitive and is bound up with other dimensions: affective, social, and ethical.

The cognitive dimension is described in various ways. A commonly-held view, derived from concepts of disciplinary knowledge (Schwab, 1978a, 1978b), holds that teachers' subject matter knowledge is dualistic, consisting of substantive structures and syntactic structures. Teachers, in this view, know the organization of the facts or concepts of their subject, and they know how new facts or concepts are created within their subject. Some explain this distinction as "knowledge of" and "knowledge about" the subject, respectively (Kennedy 1990; McDiarmid & Ball, 1989). In any case, this view defines teachers' knowledge of subject matter in cognitive terms, as defined by academic notions of what it means to "know" a subject or a discipline.

However, researchers have found that teachers' cognitive understanding is influenced by their personal rapport with their subject. Researchers have described various dimensions of this rapport, ranging from teachers' "beliefs" about the subject (Brickhouse, 1990), their "perceptions" (Kennedy, 1990), "perspectives" (Wineburg & Wilson, 1988), "understandings" (McDiarmid & Ball, 1989), "conceptions" (Freeman, 1991a, 1991b), "visions" (Wineburg and Wilson, 1991) of their subject, their "feelings" about it (Ball, 1988), their "sense of self in relation to it" (Ball, 1988), their "stance" toward it (Lyons, 1990), or their "value orientations" (Gudmundsdottir, 1990) toward their subject, including ethical and moral values. Taken together, such





concepts reflect the personal nature of teachers' subject matter knowledge, namely, that teachers filter or construe their knowledge of the subject in idiosyncratic ways.

This distinction between teachers' individualized, idiosyncratic knowledge of the subject and the knowledge of the subject is described in various ways in the literature. Carlsen (1990) refers to the latter as public understandings, how the profession defines knowledge of subject matter, and to the former as private understandings, how individual teachers actually know their subject. Teachers' idiosyncratic knowledge is also described as "personal knowledge" (Carter, 1990), "practical knowledge" (Elbaz, 1983), "personal practical knowledge" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1985), or as "psychological" (Hargreaves, 1988).

Other researchers have further suggested that this personal dimension is more than idiosyncrasy and is rather a function of the social dimension of subject matter knowledge. Such social dimensions are linked to the socialization process that teachers go through in their acquisition of their subject matter (Yaakobi and Sharan, 1985; Gudmundsdottir, 1990). This acquisition process contributes to teachers' "subject identity" (Hargreaves 1988), their "feelings of attachment, loyalty, and identification" and their "subject membership" (ibid.) in the "subject subculture" (Zeichner and Gore, 1990), made up of other teachers of their subject. Gudmundsdottir (1990) suggests that when teachers "study the subject matter they will later teach to high school students, they are not just learning facts; they are acquiring a world view imbued with values" (p.47).

To summarize, research on the nature of teachers' knowledge of subject matter suggests that the nature of such knowledge is highly personal, idiosyncratic. It encompasses not only teachers' cognitive knowledge of and about the subject, but also their personal rapport with it, namely, their perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and values orientations towards the subject matter and the social dimensions associated with learning it.

## 2. Teaching and subject matter knowledge

By definition, teachers' subject matter knowledge involves teaching. Research shows that teachers' knowledge of subject matter is intimately linked to their knowledge of teaching it, and that teachers tend not to separate the two. Teaching



includes additional dimensions that involve teaching in general, as well as teaching a particular subject matter.

Researchers vary in their definitions of the relevant dimensions associated with teaching. Kennedy (1991) describes two dimensions of "pedagogical subject-matter knowledge": subject matter and students. Carlsen (1991) proposed three categories: substantive knowledge, syntactic knowledge, and pragmatic knowledge, or "how teachers and students make sense of substantive and syntactic knowledge... in specific settings" (p.132). Ball (1988) cited four domains of "understanding": subject matter, teaching and learning, learners, and context. McDiarmid and Ball (1989) named five "dimensions of pedagogical knowledge": subject matter, curriculum, learners, learning, and context. Shulman and colleagues (1987) listed seven "categories of knowledge": content knowledge, general pedagogical knowledge, curriculum knowledge, knowledge of learners, knowledge of educational contexts, knowledge of educational aims, and pedagogical content knowledge.

For the most part, such categorizations of teacher knowledge emerge from researchers' particular views on the nature of teaching, or what Lampert called "images of teaching" (1985). As anyone involved in education knows, there are many definitions of teaching. There is no shortage of views on what teaching is or should be, and by extension, what teachers ought to know and do.

To summarize, research shows that teachers' subject matter knowledge is tied up with their conceptions of teaching it to students in their schools. Research to date has tended to describe this connection in terms of distinct dimensions that are in relationship with one another in teachers' thinking, although there is no agreement on either the number or the nature of these dimensions.

### 3. Models of organization of subject matter knowledge

Research also suggests that teachers relate these multiple dimensions of subject matter knowledge to one another in complex ways. However, there is no consensus on how teachers do so. Researchers have offered differing explanations to this end, but the overall result remains inconclusive.





In her study of the pedagogical content knowledge of six high school English teachers, Grossman discovered

...the complex interrelationship among beliefs about teaching, subject matter knowledge, and teaching context in the development of conceptions about teaching English.  
(Grossman, 1989, p. 27)

Her conclusions from this finding were that teachers' "beliefs about the goals for teaching a subject function as an organizing framework, or conceptual map, for instructional decision-making" (p.26), and also that teachers' "vision" or "implicit images" of students played dominant roles in their teaching of English.

Wineburg and Wilson (1988) concluded that four novice history teachers' "disciplinary perspectives", i.e. their conceptions of the nature of history, were significant organizing factor in their teaching of history. Similarly, Brickhouse (1990) found that three science teachers' "beliefs about science influenced not only explicit lessons about the nature of science, but also shaped an implicit curriculum concerning the nature of scientific knowledge" (p.53).

In her study of two English teachers and two history teachers, Gudmundsdottir (1990) suggested that these four teachers' "value orientations to their subject matter" (p. 1) were the organizing factor in the development of their pedagogical content knowledge. Values orientations included both moral and spiritual dimensions, such teachers' "moral purpose in the educational enterprise," "their passion for the subject matter and their mission to make it meaningful for students" (p. 48).

The notion of values as an organizing factor in teachers' thinking goes beyond values toward subject matter alone. A number of researchers have suggested that the moral dimension of teaching itself is the dominant factor. McDonald (1988) described teaching as "rooted in the teacher's own moral purpose and interests" (p. 482). Elbaz (1991a) described the "moral voice in teaching", drawing special attention to "hope, attentiveness, and caring for difference" in teachers' conceptions of teaching. Similarly, Noddings (1986) argued that teaching is a "constitutively ethical activity. It is a 'moral type of friendship' in which teachers and students work together to construct and achieve common ends" (p. 397). Therefore, an "ethic of caring" and "fidelity to persons" are central to teachers' thinking. Lyons (1990) argues that teachers' thinking is a function of "ethical dilemmas". Hargreaves (1991) attributes teachers' feelings of guilt to their "commitment to goals of care and nurturance" (p. 496).



Other researchers (McLaughlin & Talbert, 1990; Hargreaves, 1992) suggest that teachers' responses to the context in which they are teaching, "the secondary school workplace," is a dominant dimension. Some (Johnson, 1990; Stodolsky, 1988; Stodolsky & Grossman, 1995) point to the influence of the subject matter departments in schools on individual teachers' conceptions of their subjects, suggesting that collective views of departmental colleagues and of others in their schools is an important dimension of teachers' subject matter knowledge.

A few researchers have accepted the multi-dimensionality and attempted to sort out how teachers organize it. Ball, in her study of four mathematics teachers, suggested a "non-linear" interaction of teachers' ideas and understandings of various domains.

As she put it:

Another knot in the pursuit of understanding the role of subject matter knowledge in teaching mathematics, however, lies in the non-linear relationship between knowledge of mathematics and teaching. In teaching, teachers' understandings and beliefs about mathematics *interact with* their ideas about the teaching and learning of mathematics and their ideas about pupils, teachers, and the context of classrooms. (Ball 1988, p. 19)

Ball went on to ask whether certain domains may dominate or "drive and shape" a particular teachers' approach, and called for further study "to explore the balance and interaction among the critical domains in different teachers' teaching of mathematics. In a later study with a colleague, Ball suggested that the nature of teachers' knowledge is "confounded", moreover, that "teachers' understandings are a web; attempting to extract an individual strand from the web is nigh impossible" (McDiarmid & Ball, 1989, p. 19). Their conclusion was that studying individual dimensions, namely, the "strands in a web," was problematic because "in teacher thinking, these strands are interdependent and mutually supportive" (p. 20). This finding is extremely important, for it casts teachers' subject matter knowledge as a whole with multiple, interconnected, interdependent, and inseparable dimensions.

In sum, there is simply no consensus on how teachers organize the varied dimensions of subject matter knowledge. The ways in which teachers organize their conceptions of teaching their subject matter requires further research.

The present study is a contribution to this research effort.

### **Theoretical frameworks that inform this study**

As the above discussion of the nature of subject matter knowledge indicates, researchers have employed a variety of conceptual frames to characterize teachers'





personal knowledge of subject matter and of teaching. These proposed frames reflect researchers' views of what it means to know a subject, to teach a subject, or what teaching is all about.

In the present study, my intention was to understand how three teachers of high school French viewed their subject matter. I was not seeking to assess their knowledge of French, nor was I interested in evaluating their teaching, in comparing their teaching actions with their theories, nor in measuring their teaching against my own conception of teaching French or those of the language teaching profession. Rather, I simply wanted these teachers' views, their perspectives on the French they taught. The term that captured the essence of teachers' personal rapport with subject matter was "conception."

The term "conception" is used in teacher thinking research, most commonly in a literal sense to convey the notion of "view," "perspective," "perception," "understanding," and the like. Conception is also featured as an integral part of a qualitative research methodology called phenomenography (Marton, 1986). In this approach, researchers seek people's conceptions of phenomena:

Phenomenography is the empirical study of the differing ways in which people experience, perceive, apprehend, understand, conceptualize various phenomena in and aspects of the world around us. The words experience, perceive...etc. are used interchangeably. The point is not to deny that there are differences in what these terms refer to, but to suggest that the limited number of ways in which a certain phenomenon appears to us can be found, for instance, regardless whether they are embedded in immediate experience of the phenomenon or in reflected thought about the same phenomenon. (Marton, 1994 p.4225)

Conception, in this view, is a term that can be used "interchangeably" with similar terms. The point is that the conception of the phenomenon in question is the focus of the research. The phenomenon, in the case of this study, is high school French as perceived by three experienced French teachers.

This study also employs an emergent concept in research on teacher knowledge: "story" (Carter, 1993; Clandinin & Connelly, 1991). Consistent with similar concepts, such as "narrative" (Clandinin, 1992; Clandinin & Connelly, 1988; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990), "biography" (Butt & Raymond, 1987; Goodson & Walker, 1990), "life history" (Knowles, March 1991; Woods, 1987), these approaches to research focus on the individual teacher and his/her experience, and of the critical importance of portraying this experience from the teacher's point of view. In a review of the literature, Carter (1993) describes how story is used to address three aspects of research in teacher knowledge: 1) as a "a way...of capturing the complexity,



specificity, and interconnectedness of the phenomenon" ( p. 6)--as an effective means of reporting research; 2) as "a way of knowing and thinking that is particularly suited to the explicating the issues" (ibid.)--in effect, the means by which teachers perceive and express what they know; 3) as a "product of a fundamentally interpretive process that is shaped by the moralistic impulses of the author and by narrative forces or requirements" (p.9)--in other words, a description of the narrator's views and intentions.

### **Statement of the Problem**

This study focuses on a largely unstudied population in teachers' subject matter knowledge research, teachers of French. By focusing on three high school French teachers, the study not only addresses teachers of this particular subject matter, but it also explores a larger unresolved question in this field of research: how do teachers conceive of the subject they teach?

The foreign language education profession knows little about what it means for individual non-native teachers to know and teach foreign languages. Freeman and Richards, two noted thinkers in language teacher education, put the challenge to the profession in clear terms:

Our point is a basic one, namely, that in order to better understand language teaching, we need to know more about language teachers: what they do, how they think, what they know, and how they learn. Specifically, we need to know more about how language teachers conceive of what they do: what they know about language teaching, how they think about their classroom practice, and how that knowledge and those thinking processes are learned through formal teacher education and informal experience on the job. Although it should common sense to examine the teacher as pivotal in the enterprise of teaching and learning, to date questions such as these have been largely overlooked both in general educational research and in the field of language teaching. (Freeman & Richards, 1996, p. 1)

The perspectives of language teachers need to be included in the discussions of language teacher education.

### **Personal Background**

This study grows out of my own work as a language learner, language teacher and language teacher educator. Over the course of the past twenty-six years, I have taught French, Spanish, and English as a Foreign language. I began my career teaching English as a Foreign Language as a Peace Corps volunteer in Côte d'Ivoire, West Africa. Since that initial experience, I have taught Spanish and





French, and for the past nineteen years, a variety of courses to prospective language teachers in a Master of Arts in Teaching program.

In my work with prospective language teachers, particularly non-native teachers of French, I introduced the communicative and cultural dimensions that were so integral to my own learning experiences in Francophone cultures. I also introduced the psychological dimension of becoming proficient in another language, namely, the shifts of identity, personality, and self-concept that can occur, shifts that I had observed in my own language learning. This work consisted of questions generated from my own experience as a French practitioner: How do you see yourself as a Francophone? What is the relationship between this view and your French teaching? These questions provoked the most intriguing discussions about the impact of a teacher's relationship with the language that they teach.

These discussions and my personal interest in this relationship led me to pursue it further through doctoral study. My original perspective was on the language/culture and on questions of identity. As I learned more about the field of teacher thinking, my focus changed. Specifically, in preparation for my dissertation proposal, I conducted a pilot study of a non-native teacher of high school Spanish (Moran, 1996), where my original intention was to study her perceptions of the culture she taught. Because of this study, I discovered that conceptions of culture needed to be set within a larger frame of reference. This discovery led me to the field of teachers' subject matter knowledge and the focus of the present study.





## CHAPTER TWO METHODS

In this study, my overall intention was to examine non-native French teachers' views of their subject matter, or as I explained it to the teachers in our initial conversation, "I want to find out how you think about the French you teach." This chapter describes the design of this study, the selection of participants, the phases of the inquiry, methods of data collection and data analysis, followed by discussion of validity issues, and ends with a description of the challenges that I encountered.

### **Research Design**

This study attempted to explore three non-native French teachers' conceptions of the French they taught. In this study, I intended to map a previously unresearched territory: non-native foreign language teachers' thinking about their subject matter. Because the focus was to capture teachers' perspectives, I chose qualitative research methodology. I entered this study without a theoretical framework of "conception of subject matter," with the intention that this phenomenon emerge from the study, consistent with the grounded theory approach (Strauss, 1987) to qualitative research.

The design of this study was based on three assumptions: 1) teachers possess a conception of subject matter which can be made explicit; 2) teachers' conceptions of subject matter derive from their past and present experiences; 3) teachers' current classroom practices reflect their conceptions of subject matter. Accordingly, I proposed a sequence of nine interviews to focus on three general areas derived from these assumptions: teachers' present and past experiences learning and teaching French; their views on curriculum, students, colleagues, and their school; their views of what happened in three French classes that I observed. From this data, I wrote three narrative accounts describing and explaining each teacher's conception of teaching French in his/her school. Teachers reviewed these accounts and I incorporated their comments in a revised narrative account. I then conducted a cross-case analysis to identify themes and a conceptual framework. I returned the revised accounts to the teachers for a second and final review.



## **Participants**

The three teachers participating in this study taught French in public high schools in three New England states. All were non-native French speakers. They had been teaching in their schools for at least ten years. Although each taught more than one foreign language, all had begun their careers as French teachers and had continued to teach French. All had a Master's degree in teaching foreign languages or a related field. My intention in this sampling was to study teachers who had shown a commitment to both the subject matter and to teaching it in one school long enough to have established a teaching practice relative to that context.

I did consider establishing other criteria for selection of teachers, such as a preferred language teaching methodology, a certain level of proficiency in the language, or certain previous experiences in French-speaking cultures. I decided not to do this, reasoning that to establish these as prerequisites would presume their relevance to teachers' conceptions, just as my definitions of these prerequisites would also assume a conception of subject matter. This is not to say that these criteria are not relevant; they probably are. However, I had no reason to make this assumption. Another consideration was to avoid comparison of language teaching methodologies or teaching effectiveness. I did not want to study teachers identified as exemplary. Likewise, the age of teachers could have been a relevant factor to their conceptions, but I had no valid reason to establish prerequisites for participants' ages. Therefore, I elected to use advanced study and a minimum of five years teaching experience in one school as the sole criteria.

By concentrating on one language, French, I hoped to increase the viability of cross-case analysis among teachers' conceptions of subject matter. Also, I limited my study to three teachers because of the time required to conduct a grounded, in-depth study. Another important factor in the choice of teachers was my proximity to them. In order to effect the observation and interview schedule that I proposed, travel to and from participants' sites needed to be kept to a minimum.

## **Research relationship**

In explaining the study to the teachers, I stressed that my purpose was not to evaluate them or their teaching, rather that I wanted to understand their perspective on their teaching of French. I explained the interview procedures and the kinds of topics I would ask them about. I gave them each a consent form (see Appendix A),





giving them the freedom to edit their words as they appeared in the interview transcripts and the narrative account, including changing or deleting their words, if they so chose. I also had to explain the nature of qualitative research to them, particularly the research on teacher thinking.

My study depended on teachers' telling me their stories, so I made a special effort to listen well and carefully to what they said.

### Data Collection

The data collection resulted from nine interviews, organized into three general topic areas: 1) personal history (BIO) interviews, 2) curriculum and materials (CUR) interviews; 3) classroom observations and post-observation interviews (OBS). Three interviews were conducted for each stage, for a total of 9 interviews per teacher. I tape recorded all interviews, transcribed them, and gave teachers a copy of each transcript. In addition, I collected or copied curricular and other instructional materials from each teacher. I also tape recorded the classes I observed, and made field notes of these classroom observations.

The interviews averaged about an hour in length. I did have a set of guiding questions for each interview (see Appendix B), but the interviews were open-ended. The interviews took place over a period of four months, following this schedule:

	Carl Harvey	Molly Evans	Susan Winston
<u>initial meeting</u>		<u>9 Sept 94</u>	<u>16 Sept 94</u>
BIO1	15 Sept 94	23 Sept 94	27 Sept 94
BIO2	29 Sept 94	30 Sept 94	7 Oct 94
BIO3	11 Oct 94	14 Oct 94	25 Oct 94
CUR1	27 Oct 94	28 Oct 94	9 Nov 94
CUR2	8 Nov 94	11 Nov 94	18 Nov 94
CUR3	17 Nov 94	22 Nov 94	29 Nov 94
OBS1	1 Dec 94	2 Dec 94	9 Dec 94
OBS2	8 Dec 94	16 Dec 94	22 Dec 94
OBS3	17 Jan 95	6 Jan 95	10 Jan 95

Figure 1: Interview Schedule



### Personal History Interviews

In these interviews, my intention was to get teacher's experiences with French, as learners and teachers.

To elicit their own views of their use and relationship with the language, I asked them this question : "How would you describe your French now?" This allowed them to answer as they chose, and helped me avoid evaluative questions, such as "How proficient are you in French?" or "How would you assess your French?" I also asked them to describe what their preferences were in French, what they found themselves gravitating towards, or spending most of their time on in their own use of French. This allowed teachers to describe the role French played in their lives, both in and outside school.

After the third interview, I drafted a time line of each teacher's account , putting down the information that they shared with me. I then drafted an interpretive time line (Appendix C), in which I offered a rendition of their personal history with French that captured significant events, developments, or influences--again, based on what they had shared with me. Teachers reviewed both these documents, and made changes that suited their point of view.

### Curriculum Interviews

In this series of three interviews, I asked teachers to describe to me the overall curriculum in the language department, and the curriculum and materials for the individual French courses they were teaching that year. I also asked them about the role of language study in the school, about their colleagues, and about the students in the language program in general and in their French courses.

### Observations

I observed each teacher three times. Two of the teachers (Molly and Susan) taught only one French class, so I saw only one class when I observed them. Carl taught three French classes, and I observed two of them each visit. I tape recorded the class, took notes, and wrote these up in a four-part format: Time; Activity; What the Teacher Did; What the Students Did (Appendix D). In observing the teachers' lessons, I was attentive to how they represented French to the students, through their own use of the language, the content, activities, and also their relationship with the students.



### Post-Observation Interviews

Following the observation, I interviewed the teacher about the class. In the interviews, I asked teachers to tell me what they wanted the students to work on in the class that I had observed. I asked this question each interview, and in the final interview, I added a question on how they assessed and graded students' work in their courses.

### Transcription

I transcribed each interview in its entirety and sent it to the teacher before conducting each subsequent interview. At the outset of the next interview, I asked teachers if they had any comments on the transcript, and in some instances, this led to additional comments from teachers. This approach began to break down in the last stage, as I was unable to keep up with the transcription, and sometimes got transcripts to teachers only the day before the interview, leaving them little time to read and react to them. As it turned out, teachers varied in their interest in reading through the transcriptions and in their attention to editing or expanding what they had said. The final set of interviews coincided with the December break, and teachers were very busy, which also affected this process.

### What happened

During this four-month process, a number of events occurred that affected the data collection and ongoing analyses:

- In the very first interview, ostensibly about their personal history with French, teachers began telling me about their immediate situations, their perceptions and feelings about ongoing events, circumstances, and people in their schools, including specific students and colleagues. Each teacher was dealing with something or someone, and they expressed their views on these in the interviews. While this did not surprise me, it was not something that I had explicitly asked them about. I had not anticipated this as a source of data. However, I soon realized that teachers' portrayal of these situations and their responses to them conveyed much about their conceptions of teaching French. These stories became interwoven with the established topics of the interviews. I could not ignore them. Eventually, I included them in the narrative accounts as "The Situation."





- The research process provoked teachers to question themselves and their work, and in the case of Carl Harvey, to take action and change the entire curriculum in one course that he was teaching. Molly Evans talked about her ongoing struggle with the new departmental curriculum, articulating her concerns and questions through our interviews. In the later interviews she wondered about her choice of teaching as a career. At her request, I provided her with some readings on adult development theory.
- As mentioned, I presented the purpose of my study as "to find out how you think about teaching French." However, I did not ask this as a direct question throughout the course of these nine interviews. Prior to the interviews, I had asked myself this question, and wrote several pages in response. I found it a very difficult question to answer, and I ended up dealing with it in a very abstract manner, generalizing about my experiences across many years and situations. In part, this led me to decide on a more inductive approach. My questions were grounded in concrete topics: personal history, curriculum, and classroom activities, which I reasoned would make it easier for teachers to answer. This strategy seemed to work. At the same time, it made my analysis more challenging, as I describe at the end of this chapter.

## **Data Analysis**

### Ongoing Analysis

During the data collection phase, I conducted ongoing data analysis by writing analytic memos to accompany each interview transcription. As I transcribed each interview on the computer, I copied excerpts into a separate document, and added my interpretations and tentative hypotheses. Following the completion of each transcription, I then reviewed all these annotated excerpts and wrote an analytic memo, trying to piece together what was going on, along with developing questions to pursue in the next interview. About half-way through the data collection process, toward the end of the curriculum interviews, I began to use visual displays as a means of capturing my analyses. In fact, these displays (from the graphic feature of my word processing software) turned out to be a very powerful tool in my ongoing analysis of the data. I eventually included some of these displays in the narrative accounts.



### Preparation of Narrative Accounts: toward a conceptual framework

Following the data collection phase, I began work on preparing a narrative account, or case study, for each teacher. I began with Molly Evans. I read through the data again and identified nine categories: content, outcomes, activity, French, teacher outlook, personal history, students, colleagues, and school (Appendix E). Using my word processing program, I coded the data by copying relevant excerpts into these categories in a separate document, referencing them to the interviews. I printed out the results, reviewed the data again and added additional excerpts, cross-referencing those that appeared in more than one category.

After this coding process, I undertook the task of composing a written account. Here, I faced the challenge of describing Molly's conception of teaching French. I had a list of discrete categories that somehow needed to be put together. As I struggled to devise a narrative frame to encompass and organize all the data that I had gathered, I experimented and discarded several models. I tried using one of the classroom observations as an organizational device; I tried using the personal history as a frame; I also tried using the ongoing situation. None of these worked. There was simply too much to tell. These frames could not contain all the relevant categories. Because I couldn't find a unified frame, I decided to divide the narrative account into four parts: personal history, situation, conceptions of teaching French, and sources. This allowed me to tell four stories, in effect, and to gradually deepen the portrait of the teacher and the teacher's view of teaching French.

Once I hit upon this organization, I returned to Molly Evans and put together the first two stories. When it came time to tackle the third, however, I ran into an obstacle. I had difficulty organizing this story. It was at this point that I realized I did not have a clear definition of "conception of teaching French." I turned again to visual displays to work out the relationship among these discrete elements in Molly Evan's thinking, looking for a conceptual framework, a definition of a conception of teaching French. As I did so, I kept in mind what I had learned from the ongoing data analyses of Susan Winston and Carl Harvey, but my primary focus was on Molly.

As a starting point, I used a concept I called "representation of subject matter," namely, the teacher's portrayal of French to students in the classroom. I then attempted to determine what this was. This led me into several visual displays, concept maps, where I attempted to capture the larger picture. These displays





allowed me to put the categories into relationships with one another, and eventually to the conceptual framework.

I ended up with a shorter list of categories. From the original nine (content, outcomes, activity, French, teacher outlook, personal history, students, colleagues, and school), I came up with six:

teacher role	students
content	activities
outcomes	context

These categories were in relationship to one another, portrayed below in Figure 2. The adjoining text shows my early definition of the conceptual framework:

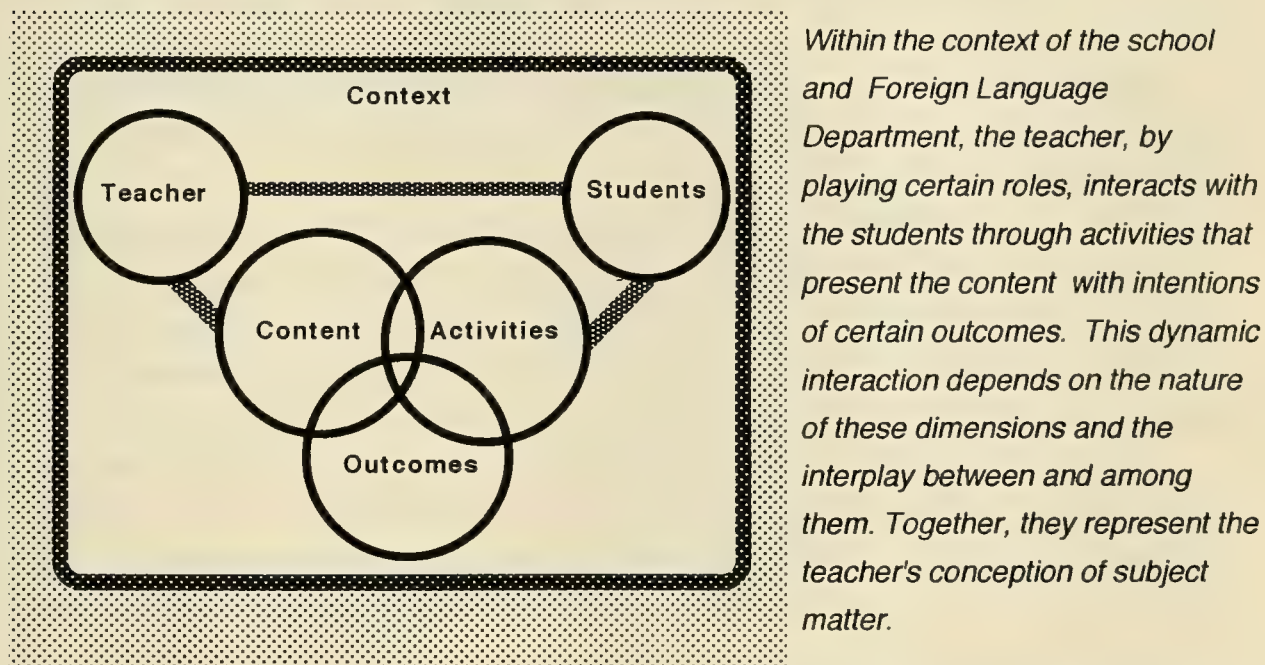


Figure 2: Conceptual Framework

With this framework established, I then wrote the narrative account for Molly Evans. When I finished, I turned to Susan Winston, and then Carl Harvey. After I completed all three, I reviewed them all to see whether the categories held up across narrative accounts. The structure and content are described below.



## The Narrative Accounts

I divided the account into four sections:

- *Personal History*  
A synopsis of the teacher's experiences with French, including learning and teaching experiences, leading up to their present teaching position.
- *Situation*  
A description of the teacher's account of circumstances and events that took place during the four-month period of data collection. Each situation reflected or portrayed outright significant aspects of the teacher's conception of French.
- *Conceptions of Subject Matter*  
A description and analysis of the teacher's conception of French, viewed from six perspectives: teacher role, students, content, activities, outcomes, and context.
- *Sources*  
An description of how the teacher arrived at his/her conceptions.

When I finished reviewing the three narrative accounts, I sent them back to the teachers for review, asking them to check for accuracy and to add written comments, if they wished. I then met with each teacher for a final interview. Since this interview occurred over a year after our last interview, I anticipated that teachers would have something to say about what had happened between "then and now." Therefore, I asked teachers to describe significant events that had occurred during the interim. Again, teachers told me the stories of the moment, not all of them relevant to the study. I recorded and transcribed these interviews. In every case, these interviews resulted in additional data, which I included in the narrative account, by inserting teachers' comments into the text in italicized script, and by adding an epilogue at the end to include teacher's views on interim events. I had to exercise judgment about what pertained and what didn't.

Once I completed the revisions, I turned to cross-case analysis.

## **Cross-Case Analysis**

When the moment of cross-case analysis arrived, I re-visited the conceptual framework. I returned to the narrative accounts and to the data for each teacher. The concept of a "dynamic interaction," the earlier description of the rapport among conceptions, needed more work. These conceptions were clearly connected in teachers' minds, but what was the nature of this interaction? I began wrestling with





the question of how teachers conceived of the connections among conceptions. This line of inquiry led me to consider which conceptions and which connections dominated in teachers' minds.

As a strategy, I wrote summaries of each narrative account, giving myself the task of reducing each teachers' conceptions to the essentials. Along with this summary, I wrote a list of the connections among conceptions. I was disappointed in the results. I had essentially repeated what was portrayed in the narrative accounts. The notion of dominant conceptions or connections was not working. The problem, I then realized, was that this framework assumed that teachers conceived of teaching French as "connections among conceptions." When I consulted the data anew, I did not find evidence of this way of thinking.

Instead, I saw teachers talking about teaching French in terms of their relationship with students. Conceptions of teacher role and of students, although on target, were really conceptions of the kind of relationship that teachers sought to establish with students, a relationship based on learning French. All three teachers consistently referred to their relationship in terms of work, as "working with students." Based on these observations of the data, I revised my conceptual framework to include the notion of a working relationship. Once I established this revised conceptual framework, I again reviewed all three narrative accounts, looking for themes and patterns related to teachers' conceptions of working relationships based on learning French. These themes and the revised conceptual framework appear in Chapter Four: Findings.

### **Validity**

Maxwell (1996) describes three kinds of validity in qualitative research: descriptive, interpretive, and theoretical. Descriptive validity involves the accuracy and completeness of data gathered, interpretive validity the accuracy of the explanation or interpretation of the data, and theoretical validity the consideration of alternative explanations or interpretations.

This study relied on interviews as the primary data collection tool. All interviews were recorded, fully transcribed, and sent to teachers for review, thus accounting for descriptive validity. The narrative accounts, where I interpreted the data, were reviewed by teachers, who commented orally and in writing on the accuracy of the





interpretations. Their comments were included in the revised versions that appear in this study, thereby addressing interpretive validity. As for theoretical validity, my interpretation that teachers conceive of the French they teach in terms of their relationships with students is grounded in the data, and in itself represents an alternative interpretation to my earlier interpretations of a dynamic interaction among conceptions, and of dominant conceptions. Indeed, Susan Winston, in her comments on the original narrative account offered an alternative interpretation that eventually helped me to discard the original interpretations of dominant conceptions or connections among conceptions. This process is described in greater detail in the Findings chapter. Nonetheless, I did not ask the teachers to review this interpretation, nor did I generate further alternative interpretations.

## Challenges

I encountered a number of challenges in the course of this study.

- Perhaps this was self-evident, but the quest for a definition of "conception of subject matter" was an integral part of this study. I had specified it as an intended outcome in my dissertation proposal. It was subliminally present in my ongoing data analysis, and it certainly appeared as a major challenge in preparation of the narrative accounts. In the cross-case analysis phase, it appeared again. While this is part of the process of grounded theory research, where theory emerges from analysis, I discovered it is easier said than done. By this, I mean that the experience of carrying out a process that I understood intellectually took on new significance. I now have a better understanding of the complexity and ambiguity of this process.
- As the conceptual framework and the accounts showed, the interconnectedness of the dimensions of teachers' conceptions of teaching French was a dominant theme. My attempts to synthesize or reduce these interconnections to a summary statement served only to reinforce the interconnectedness and the complexity. I could not easily simplify the interconnections. The more I tried, the more I came to realize that the complexity and the interconnectedness were the point. Simplifying it was not the answer.



- Once I had revised the narrative accounts with teachers' comments included, I embarked on the cross-case analysis. I judged that their comments in the revised version supported the interpretations that I had made in the original version, which was basis enough for cross-case analysis. Once I had completed the cross-case analysis, I returned the revised versions to the teachers for a final review. The dilemma I faced in this process was when to stop the iterative process of revision and review.
- This study essentially relied on identifying teachers' conceptions through induction. I gathered the data from the three starting points mentioned above: personal history, curriculum and materials, classroom observations. I did not explicitly ask teachers to state their view of the French they taught. Instead, I pieced this together from the data on personal history, their views of curriculum, students, colleagues, school, and their views on classes that I had observed. This strategy presumed the relevance of these areas to the notion of a conception of subject matter. As a result, they affected the conceptual framework that I eventually identified.





### CHAPTER THREE

#### NARRATIVE ACCOUNTS

This chapter consists of the narrative accounts for Susan Winston, Molly Evans, and Carl Harvey. They are long, detailed accounts. This is intentional. The complexity and interconnectedness of these teachers' conceptions of the French they teach requires length and detail.

Each account is organized in five parts. It begins with a Personal History, which recounts the highlights of the teacher's experiences as a learner and teacher of French. The Situation, the second part, describes key events that occurred in the four-month time span when the interviews were conducted. The third part, Conceptions of French, describes the teacher's conceptions of teaching French from six perspectives: teacher role, students, content, activities, outcomes, and context. The account continues with Sources, a discussion of origins of these conceptions. It ends with an Epilogue, a brief summary of significant events that occurred for teachers in the interim period.

The accounts include comments of the teachers on the original version of the narrative account, which occurred about sixteen months after the final interview. To distinguish these comments from the text of the original account, they are in italics, inserted in the text where teachers wrote or spoke about them, and they are cited as "Epilogue." The following comment from Molly Evans illustrates this format:

*This is so true. I think what I'm doing here a little bit is just elaborating. And also, not to minimize the importance of what I was hired to do, to open some doors for them. Show them... New things for many of them is the whole idea of travel, the world out there.*  
(Epilogue: 4/12/96)



## Susan Winston

Susan Winston, a dark-eyed brunette in her forties, was a language teacher in the local high school for the past nineteen years, teaching French and Spanish. Single-handedly, she built the language program in the school. Until two years ago, Susan was the only language teacher in the school. Now, in her twentieth year, she had an official part-time colleague who teaches three of the four French courses, while Susan taught the French III and Spanish I-IV courses.

The high school is located in a small community of about 3,700 inhabitants. There are about 200 students in the school. Foreign languages are electives, and most students who enroll take these courses in preparation for college. The Guidance Department recommends two years of language study.

Susan began her language study with French in eighth grade, her first introduction to second languages, and continued with four years in high school. Susan's father was a pilot for an international airlines, and she had a number of experiences with travel in high school.

From high school, she continued her study of French at the university. In her freshman year, she responded to an advertisement she spotted on a bulletin board, and ended up spending the following summer in France with Euro-job, her first experience abroad. She lived in a village in the French Alps and worked as a waitress in a small restaurant there, and got to know the family that ran it quite well. Following this job, she traveled briefly in Europe. Later, she was accepted into the junior year abroad program and spent the academic year living and studying in Dijon, France with a small group of students from her university. Here, she met Brigitte, a Frenchwoman who now taught English in Dijon. While she was in France, she introduced herself to her French relatives and met Jeanne, a Frenchwoman of about her age, who lived in Paris. Susan maintained both relationships ever since. During winter vacation in college, she traveled around the world with her mother on the airline pass, stopping at four or five cities along the way. She and her mother did another round-the-world trip at the end of her senior year.

When she returned to school in the U.S. she focused on getting the necessary credits for her teaching certificate. In 1973, she graduated with a major in French literature and a teaching certificate.

Upon graduation and newly married, Susan began looking for a teaching job in the area close to her home town. Not finding any, she took a job as a receiving clerk in a nearby private school for a year. She followed this with general teacher substituting in area schools, including a lengthy stint as a replacement because of the untimely death of a high school French teacher in a car accident. She took her first course in Spanish during this time, an evening course. When an opening for a





French teacher occurred at her old high school, one of her former teachers there alerted her and encouraged her to apply. She did. The principal voiced some reservations about former students returning to teach in their alma maters, but with the support of her former teacher, Susan landed the job. In the fall of 1975, she began teaching French at her old high school.

When Susan arrived, there was no set curriculum for French. She started out with a textbook series that she had seen in her college methods course, the Valette series published by D.C. Heath. With each successive year, she added texts, workbooks, and supplementary materials from this series until eventually, by 1979, she had a full set of materials for levels one through four. To this core set of materials, Susan added materials and activities that she came across over the years through workshops, conferences, courses, student teachers she supervised, and through fellow language teachers in other schools. As the sole French teacher for Levels I through IV, Susan developed her own language program.

During this time, Susan had continued her study of Spanish, and in 1980, she felt confident enough in the language to introduce Spanish I to the language program at the school. The following summer, she took a 3-week intensive course in Spanish and added Spanish II to the program. With this addition, Susan now had four classes of French and two of Spanish, making a total of 6 preparations, which would go beyond the contractual limit of five. To solve this dilemma, she combined her Level III and IV French classes into one. She continued this arrangement for the next 12 years, until 1992, when another teacher entered the picture.

In her very first year, 1975-76, Susan organized and conducted a field trip to Québec City and Montréal during the week-long spring break, even though she was pregnant with her first child. She continued to organize and conduct trips in the spring, traveling with students to France, Switzerland, Spain, Mexico, and Québec. She made these trips in sixteen of her nineteen years in the school. These trips were organized under the aegis of the school Language Club and were open to club members, regardless of their language study or proficiency. The Language Club undertook the fundraising, which they applied to the trip as well as to other events and activities, such as Amnesty International and the Peace Corps pen pal project.

In 1986, Susan enrolled in a MAT program and at the end of two consecutive summers of course work, completed her degree with a concentration in Spanish. This degree allowed her to obtain state certification to teach Spanish. While a student in this program, Susan established relationships with other teachers of French and Spanish, with whom she exchanged materials and teaching ideas. She continued these relationships after completion of the program, as well as the exchange of materials with these colleagues.

As the years passed, Susan built up a network of colleagues and friends that supported her work as a language teacher. These included a classmate from her university days, now a teacher of French and Spanish in a high school in another part of the state, others she met at language teaching workshops and institutes she attended, and one she met while teaching French in a private school summer





program. In the mid-1980s, she joined a local group of Francophiles who met once a month in members' homes to speak French and visit with Francophone guests from different countries. And she had her connections in France, her cousin Jeanne in Paris, and her friend Brigitte in Dijon. In addition, she had a friend in the community, a Francophile, who supported her fundraising activities and accompanied Susan on trips to the French Library in Boston for cultural activities there.

Susan's own relationship with French was a vital one. She was interested in literature, and read French authors regularly. She had a passion for cinema, as well. Both of these interests are featured in her curriculum. Her long-standing relationships with Francophone colleagues and friends represented an intimate link to France and French language and culture. In particular, her cousin Jeanne was a sort of mentor to Susan in her exploration of French culture.

Such was the importance of this network of colleagues and friends to Susan that when she was considering a move to Florida, she knew that she would have a very hard time setting up something similar down there, and this was a factor in her decision not to move. Beginning in 1990, Susan also participated in a discussion group organized by language professors at a nearby state college for high school language teachers where pedagogical issues were shared and explored.

In such a small school, language classes tended to be small and enrollment was therefore crucial to the vitality of the language program. With limited classroom space, scheduling language classes was an ongoing challenge in Susan's school. Scheduling was the domain of the Guidance Department. Over the years, Susan had to intervene with Guidance in order to assure that language courses for all levels in French and Spanish were available to students. This was particularly challenging for Levels III and IV, which went beyond the two years of language study recommended by Guidance. This year, for instance, in order to have a Level III French class, Susan had to schedule it in two different classrooms, split in two 22-minute periods, separated by a 30-minute lunch period. Without such contortions, Susan would not be able to offer 4 years of language study as an option to students.

In fact, this option to offer 4 years in both Spanish and French did not arise until 1993, when a student teacher was hired to stay on as a part-time French teacher following his practicum year. For 1993-94, this teacher, Will, taught all four levels of French, permitting Susan to add a section of Spanish I, and more importantly, Spanish IV to the language program for the first time. The decision to create this part-time position was made by the principal, and came about as a result of Will's willingness to teach four classes (although he was paid for only three), and that Susan was teaching six classes. Also, Susan guessed that Will's popularity with other teachers in the school and his winning personality, which came out during his student teaching tenure, had an impact on the principal and his decision. During Will's student-teaching year, Susan took on an additional course, an independent study of 6 students, which in effect became a class, thus making for 6 preparations.



With a colleague for the first time in her career, Susan had to define aspects of the language program more specifically than she had previously done. By nature, Will tended to be an organizer, and Susan found his added attention to organizing a real bonus. He and she mapped out the French curriculum, organized and sequenced the materials and activities that Susan had been using over the years. The result was a set of teacher resource binders for each level, containing handouts, worksheets, and references to the textbooks and other published materials. The teacher could pick and choose from the content and activities, and distribute relevant handouts to students, who in turn kept their own binder for the course.

Will did not stay for a second year, opting instead to pursue a Masters degree in French. The part-time position remained in the school budget, however, and the principal advertised it as a position for a French teacher. Susan's preference was for a French-Spanish teacher, but her recommendation to advertise for both a Spanish and French teacher was not heeded, and she was disappointed that the advertisement did not include both. She did review applications and gave her preferences to the principal, who made the decision to hire a French teacher. In 1994-95, the year of this study, Susan had a second colleague, Jane, who taught French I, II, and IV. Again, the discussion of specifying content and outcomes arose as Jane sought to clarify what the French I and II students needed to know for French III, the course that Susan taught.

Susan was constantly on the lookout for new materials and activities and open to experimentation. In the summer of 1994, she taught French in a summer program and had an opportunity to experiment with a video-based instructional program, *French in Action*<sup>1</sup>. Based on this experience, she decided to include it as a part of the French III curriculum for the present academic year. Also, through discussions with Jane, Susan decided to try out dialogue journals with her French III class and was satisfied with the results achieved at mid-year.

### ***The Situation***

Susan began the 1994-95 school year with two changes from previous years. First, she had a new colleague, Jane, hired part-time to teach three of the four French courses. Secondly, she was experimenting with a video-based set of materials, *French in Action*, as part of her French III course. Aside from these differences, there were additional ongoing challenges that cropped up every year associated with Susan's mission to build up the language program, most notably negotiating with the Guidance Department regarding the enrollment in language classes and the schedule.

### ***The Guidance Department***

One of Susan's priorities in this school was to strengthen the language program. The advent of Will the year before, who as a part-time teacher, had agreed to teach an additional courses beyond his contract for three courses, allowed Susan

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<sup>1</sup> *French in Action: A Beginning Course in Language and Culture*. Pierre Capretz. 1987. Yale University Press: New Haven, CT.





to teach all four levels of Spanish for the first time, thereby giving the language program a tremendous boost.

The scheduling of language classes was a critical factor in the viability of the language programs in both French and Spanish. If language courses were scheduled in conflict with other courses, especially required courses, students could not take language. Because the head of Guidance did not coordinate with her in drawing up the schedule, Susan only discovered these conflicts and difficulties after the schedule was posted.

Sometimes I feel that Guidance isn't working with me as closely as they could be. We could perhaps have a much better program if there were more coordination, but sometimes it seems like it just doesn't work. There are so many conflicts with class schedules. There's very little flexibility in the whole program... (Bio 2:7)

Also, because Susan was not privy to students' original preferences for courses, submitted to Guidance, she did not know how many of them had originally wanted to take languages but were informed by Guidance that they couldn't. This year, for example, Susan learned about such instances after the fact, almost by accident.

I know they've happened to other students, because I had an advisory meeting yesterday. One of the questions... We have activities we're supposed to present, and I did follow the activities this time. It said, for the students, Are there courses you'd like to take that you can't take because of conflicts? One girl told me, "Yes, French II." Another girl told me, "Yes, Spanish III." Here I'm the language teacher and I didn't know about these type conflicts. I don't hear about them. I don't know about them. It's unfortunate. (Bio 2:10)

As an advocate for the language programs, Susan was prepared to make accommodations in the schedule in order that students could take French or Spanish courses. This year, in fact, she shifted things around in order to make her French III class possible. This involved splitting the 75 minute period into two 25 minute periods, separated by a 25-minute lunch period. Each 25 minute period took place in a different classroom. This was virtually the same accommodation that she had made the previous year for Spanish. As she described it:

Last year, in order to have this schedule, here, to make it work, I had to go down to Guidance and stay there for about an hour, and say, "We can do it. We can each teach four classes, but we'll have to split up the Spanish I, which is way too big at 30." "Well, how can we do that?" "Well, can't we have another one third period?" Because that was the period that they had given me French III, or something to that effect. "Well, we can, just looking at the schedules. The upperclassmen can take it third period, but there's no classroom available." So then, I looked at the classes and where there were free classes. I said, "Well my class is free A lunch, and the one next door is free B lunch." "Are you sure you want to do that?" I said, "If it's the only solution, we'll do it." And so last year, we had A lunch in my classroom, my little classroom, and we'd all go and eat lunch. Then we'd come back and be in another classroom.

PM: You split the class in half?

Susan: Yes. It's the same students. They would come back... And it was fine. In fact, we would all come back, and they all learned how to say, I ate, I drank. "What did you eat? What did you drink?" So that was fun. They were a good group. They still are. I have most of them this year. Except that if you gave a test, I had to split the test in half. They couldn't look at it, and then go to lunch, talk about it, and then come back. So it had a few little technical problems, but I feel like the only way you can make changes is jump in... (Bio 2:12)



Such machinations did not bother Susan. To the contrary, she welcomed the opportunity to make the program better.

But my feeling is that I don't mind. My feeling is that you're coming up with something that is going to work, and it's going to make the program better. "Well couldn't we work it out a little differently so that Spanish I can be offered another period when the freshmen can take it?" And the answer was, "Well you know what a big hassle it was last year!" But I felt it really wasn't a hassle. It was working on a project that in the end gave us a much stronger curriculum. It wasn't a hassle. (Bio 2:12)

The difficulty, in Susan's estimation, lay with the Guidance Department and the attitudes toward languages and language study that she found there. The "hassle" in arranging for students to enroll in languages was one such attitude. In part, this was reflected in students' being steered away from language study, particularly if they were not in the upper echelon of students.

Overall, I think the program's grown in our offerings. But as far as number of students in the classes, so much of it is contingent upon what periods they have free, and where they're directed. I have problems with direction, too, because in a small school, sometimes students aren't encouraged to take languages, especially if they're not in the A division.

I had one mother come in with her daughter, who's in my class, and say that she had gone into Guidance and was told that she couldn't take languages. Her mother said, "I believe they're important. I want her to have four years of a language. So I went into Guidance, and I told her, 'She has to have it.' And she got it." (B2:11)

When the schedule precludes larger numbers of students from taking language courses, especially at the lower levels, the viability of the language program itself is threatened. This year, such a threat occurred with the way Guidance had scheduled the Spanish I course.

This year, because Jane teaches three courses--French I, II, and IV--and that's all our money, our budget, would allow, I'm teaching Spanish I, II, III, IV, and French III. There's only one Spanish I. They offered it during third period, when there aren't many freshman who could take it, so I think I only have six freshmen. The rest are upperclassmen, including some seniors, who will not be able to stay in the program very long. It's such an incredible reverse. I had to speak to the principal about that. I said, "It's going to hurt our program in the future, our Spanish program." (B2:11)

A discouraging attitude was also manifested toward Susan and her efforts to make language courses more accessible.

Sometimes when I get my nose in Guidance, I feel like I'm not wanted. (Bio 2:11)

The French III course that Susan taught this year exemplified many of these scheduling difficulties. It met four days a week, Monday and Tuesday, Thursday and Friday, instead of the normal five. Students could not come to class on Wednesdays because they had to attend chemistry class during that time slot. Like the Spanish course in the previous year, the French III course was split into two parts, sandwiched around the lunch hour. For each part, class was held in a different classroom. Students attended class in one room for 25 minutes, went to lunch, and resumed class in another room for the final 25 minutes--four days a week.

On top of this scenario, Susan had added another modification. She had agreed to take on a French II student as an independent study during the French III time slots. This student was interested in taking French II, but was unable to take it





when it was offered because of a conflict with the Driver's Education course. Susan made this accommodation, anticipating the following year:

Because I don't want to lose her. If it meant she couldn't take French II, then that would mean that next year--she's a junior--she wouldn't be in with the French IIs, and that's a very small class. I think Jane has five or six. (Obs 2:11)

In order to manage a French II student along with the French III students in the same class, Susan divided her time between the two. On Mondays and Wednesdays, she worked with the French II student, while the French III students worked independently. On Tuesdays and Thursdays, she worked with the French III students, while the French II student worked alone. On Fridays, she worked with the whole class.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	
11:36 - 11:59	<b>French II</b> French III	<b>French III</b> French II	<b>French II</b>	<b>French III</b> French II	<b>French II&amp;III</b>	Classroom A
12:00- 12:20	<i>Lunch Period</i>					
12:28- 12:50	<b>French II</b> French III	<b>French III</b> French II	<b>French II</b>	<b>French III</b> French II	<b>French II&amp;III</b>	Classroom B

Figure 3: French II/III Weekly Schedule

Susan was used to such combinations of levels and mixes of independent and teacher-guided class work. After all, this was a key strategy that she used to build up the language program in both French and Spanish. Nonetheless, it was essentially a strategy of accommodation, one she used to combat the limitations imposed by the Guidance Department. And it took its toll, since students had to make the accommodations as well.

This year, in fact, she encountered resistance in her Spanish III-IV classes, which she had combined. She gives an account of what happened:

Just today, I was telling the Home Ec teacher about this Spanish IV class I have and how I had--it wasn't a crisis in Spanish my Spanish IV--but I had given a quiz. There are some Spanish III students in there, and I asked them at the end to talk about their progress in Spanish class. And they said, "We don't feel we're making much progress, because we don't get a chance to speak." That really bothered me yesterday. I was really unhappy. I was ready to say, Well I'm doing this preparation so you can follow this course independently. And I was ready to say, Well just don't take it. Even though they're Spanish III and interested, I felt that if they're not happy doing their work, then...and I was only teaching them one day a week...

But then I thought about it. And I said, "Well let's handle this as a class." So I went in yesterday and said--in English--"We have to discuss this. They're not happy, because they're not talking enough." And they said, "We'd like to have two days with you, and have them have two days, and then one day together." I said, "Well that seems like a good plan, but we do have a Spanish III course, and it was my feeling that this was a Spanish IV." Then I went





back and told them that when I started teaching, there was French I, II, III. They said, "There was no Spanish?" And I said, "No. I started Spanish in 1980." "You did?" They didn't know.

Sometimes you just assume they know everything, but they didn't have a clue. Then I told them that last year was the first time we had a Spanish IV, and I was so happy that we had a Spanish IV, that we were getting a Spanish IV curriculum, that I wanted to continue that. So it was probably just my own goal for the department as to why the course was set up the way it was. I said, But we can change it. What do you suggest? And the Spanish IV said, "Well let's give them two days, we'll do two days, and we'll do one day together."

I have tried to teach third--and this is not because I've never tried it--I have tried teaching III and IV. One year we'll do culture, and the next year we'll do literature. So if you're III, we'll all do the same thing. If you're IV, we'll all do it. And I found that there are such vast differences between a level III and a level IV, that one gets frustrated, and--well, they all get frustrated. That's why my feeling is that they need to learn different things at different times.

But when they said this, and they said, "Well we really like Destinos"--the TV Program--"and we could do that on Friday, and do role plays with that." So that's what we did today, and that's where we're going from here. I felt it was a good solution. I'm not so rigid that I think we have to have set curriculum and you can't change it, even though I do constantly want to improve the program. It turns out that in this class, even the level III students are seniors. So they're all seniors, and they want to help each other. And they like being together. So that's the basis of my decision.

Sometimes you just can't work toward a goal. If I had said, "We're going to work toward this goal, that year by year the department is going to do better, and we're going to have a French/Spanish IV curriculum, and we're not going to change it." I think if I had been that rigid, I would be two fewer students today. But I think, I've always been...I look at who's in my class and say, "We can handle this." They can handle that. And so, I don't have a set curriculum that's the same every year. Sometimes you have to look at who's in your class, before you go on. (Bio 2:15)

In her account of this incident, Susan revealed how students have to adapt their expectations of the course, and how the difference in students' abilities really demands that they work on different content areas to avoid frustration. She also reveals how she has to re-order her own expectations regarding curriculum; namely, that she doesn't have "a set curriculum that's the same every year," that what she teaches is more a function of "who's in your class." In this case, she couldn't really institute a Spanish IV curriculum, since she had to accommodate the Spanish III students in the same class.

Susan also made the point that students participated in the decision leading to the solution, and it appeared that their recognition of Susan's efforts in building a four year program was an important factor, as was their willingness to compromise.

Thus, the Guidance Director exerted a significant influence on the language program, both because of recommendations to students about taking language courses, and because of the scheduling of language classes, particularly for Levels III and IV. This was the case during the year of this study, and according to Susan, it was simply the continuation of a long-standing challenge that she had faced year after year in this school.

*French III is still split into two sections. It's larger this year. There are five students, and only one of them takes chemistry. So, I lose one on Wednesday. What I do is meet with her--she's a little weak--immediately afterwards. I meet with her sixth period. So I guess*



*I'm still flexible and willing to compromise. But there are no other levels in that class. It's a pure French III, which is much more enjoyable.*

*We are doing French in Action on Fridays, not every Friday but from time to time. That still seems to work well, as long as I give them a little resume ahead of time with vocabulary and some rules. That does work well. . . . But at this point, it reminded me that a lot of the things are the same, a lot of the situation itself. But I'm trying to remain flexible within the whole situation. (Epilogue: 5/8/96)*

### **A New Colleague**

In large part, Susan's efforts and sacrifices to establish a four-year program in French and Spanish contributed to the principal's decision to add a part-time position.

The year before--I guess this was probably the pivotal year, actually, '92-'93--because we had gotten enough language students. There was a French I, II, III, and a Spanish I, II, III. And this one had a IV student in it, Jerry Haines, who's now at Dartmouth. He was a real strong student, and now is majoring in French, and he's in France again.

But what I did is I taught [French] I, II, III-IV and then Spanish I, II, and I had six students who wanted to take Spanish. So, even though we're only paid to teach five, I said I would do Spanish III independently with six students. Well, you don't do six students independently. It was a regular class, every first period. I liked the class. I was so thrilled that they wanted to take it. It's an elective. No one has to take any languages in this school. Any one who takes it is in there because they signed up, unless their parents are insisting that they have to do it. Because of that, because I had six courses, and I guess the enrollment for the following year was high enough. To keep it going, they agreed to hire him [Will] part-time.

And that's what made the difference. I'm absolutely positive that if I had not taught that extra class here, we never would have had a second language teacher. That's what it took.

(Bio 2:6)

Thus, with the aid of Will, the student teacher, Susan was able to get the enrollment up to a level that warranted a part-time position.

The process of advertising this position and the hiring, however, showed another dimension that affected Susan's ability to build a strong language program: her influence over staffing.

When it came time to advertise it again, I felt a little bit like I was walking on eggs. Because, first of all, I wondered, Would we have the position? The principal isn't one to come up and say, "Hey we got it." Not at all. You just wait as to find out. And at one point, I believe I asked him, "Are we going to have that?" And he said, "Yes." And, "Could I be in on the process?"--as that was one way of finding out. "Of course, you can be in on the process."

But it was very sporadic. I had a hard time talking to him as to--he's the one who advertised it--and I didn't know when he put it in the paper. I didn't know when he had candidates. A lot of times the papers would come into him, and he would share them if he wanted to share them. If he felt the person was not qualified, he didn't let me see the papers. I really don't think this was right. It's his prerogative, I know. He can do that. He has the final word, but I would have loved to have seen all of them. He showed me, I think, in the end he showed me three or four, I believe. He advertised for French. I did mention at one time to him, "Could we not advertise it as a Spanish/French position?" He was against that. He said that if we did that, we would cut out people who were qualified in either one of the languages. For some reason, he did not want to do French and/or Spanish. My desire would have been to have someone who could do both, so that we could share. We could both teach beginning and advanced courses, in both languages. That would be great. (Bio 3:18)





Thus, by adding a teacher who was only able to teach one language, there was less flexibility in the program. More to the point, the principal's management style limited Susan's involvement, which she accepted but didn't think was "right."

In any event, the position was advertised, and Jane was hired to teach three French courses for 1994-95. The following diagram charts the involvement of colleagues in the development of a more defined curriculum in French.

<b>1975-1980</b>	Susan teaches French I-III		
<b>1980-1992</b>	Susan teaches both French and Spanish, combining classes at upper levels to maintain 5 preparations. French I-IV, Spanish I-III.		NO SET CURRICULUM
<b>1992-1993</b>	Susan takes on an extra class, 6 preparations. Spanish IV is taught for the first time.  Enrollment increases.  Principal decides to hire a part-time language teacher.	Will arrived to do his student teaching. Teaches French I, II, III in the winter and spring. Decides to help Susan build the program.	
<b>1993-1994</b>	Susan responds to requests to organize the curriculum. With Will, she prepares binders for each level, containing content, activities, and materials.	Will hired to teach French part-time. Teaches all four levels of French.	CURRICULUM ORGANIZED INTO BINDERS
<b>1994-1995</b>	Susan teaches Spanish I-IV and French III.	Jane hired as a part-time French teacher. Teaches French I, II, and IV. Seeks clarification on outcomes required at each Level, especially those for French III.	A NEED FOR LEARNING OUTCOMES, PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES

Figure 4: Development of Course Binders

*This chart looks fine to me. It looks good. (Epilogue: 5/8/96)*

During the time of this study, Susan was getting acquainted with Jane, her newly hired colleague. Even so, two events took place that were significant: discussions between the two on the French curriculum and student performance criteria; Susan's adoption of one of Jane's teaching techniques, dialogue journals.

The discussions on the French curriculum had to do with establishing the requirements to pass from one level to another, specifically from French II to French III. Since she taught Level II and Susan Level III, Jane wanted to know exactly what she needed to teach students in order to prepare them for Level III. These discussions were a continuation, in a sense, of Will's organization of the curriculum guide binders for French I-IV the previous year.



This process represented a sort of codification and structuring of the content and activities for the language programs.—Up until Will's arrival, Susan had managed without a "set curriculum," and operated from the "freedom to pick and choose," a process that she liked.

Teaching, transferring from French to Spanish, I did not come up with a set curriculum. I kept all my papers for one class in each folder. I pretty much knew what I wanted to do, on my own. At the end of the year, I would go through and make sure all the papers for that class were in the folder. So, I could choose. I felt good about that. I felt I had the freedom to pick and choose. I didn't have to follow a set curriculum.

When Will came, perhaps knowing that he was coming, we talked about putting everything in a binder, and making it more formal. That's what we did. We decided we weren't going to go back through all the years and the past folders, and just put everything in, but we would start with that year, the last year. As we taught, we would put papers in a folder and that would be the beginning of a curriculum, a set program, that we could follow or not. Yet it would be there. It would be established.

So, we have binders now--three inch binders, so they're quite wide--we have one for every class. At the beginning of each binder, there is a yearly program for what is expected to be covered. Then it's divided into the four quarters, and in each quarter the things that we cover that particular year. (Curr 1:5)

This organization of material into binders represented the what and how of the curriculum, a "yearly program for what is expected to be covered," that is, "a set program."

This year, nonetheless, Jane needed more clarity about outcomes:

I think where we are now is at the point of saying--and I can see this now, having a colleague--that we are going to have to be more coordinated as far as the articulation between levels. Jane was just saying the other day that she needs to know what her students in French II are going to have to know by the end of Level II. What do they need to know to come into French III? I think that's nice, in a way, if you're working with another person. Then you can say, "Well I think at Level III, they should know..." and, "What do you think?" You can have a conversation about where, at what point, should they know how to use the *passé composé*, and use them correctly and comfortably. Should that be at the end of II, the beginning of III, middle of III, or wherever. This is what's been lacking as far as the department goes: just dialogue about that. (Curr 1:6)

I feel that what Jane and I are planning to do could be quite useful. We're planning on making a list of behaviors, or performance objectives, if you will, that we would like to see the students accomplish by the end of the year, and after we come up with that list, of feeling more free to use whatever material we would like to accomplish that. That way, we will know that we'll have covered certain things, and we can free ourselves up from the book. If we would like to teach something more quickly, we can. I think Jane's feeling a little frustrated by the book, which is teaching the subject pronouns one by one. It might be easier just to teach them, and just to use them more, rather than to spend several--and they do, they spend several units, introducing them quite slowly. (Curr 2:18)

These conversations with Jane went a step further in the establishment of a "set program" through the establishment of "performance objectives." Such objectives could liberate teachers from the book and allow them the freedom to reach the objectives as they see fit. This freedom to "pick and choose" was important to Susan, and was something she wanted to preserve.





Thus, with Susan's conscious effort to build up the language program by taking on additional courses, the subsequent increases in enrollment resulted in a part-time position, and therefore a colleague. Both the previous colleague and the present one then pushed for greater organization and clarity in the curriculum, calling upon Susan to articulate her expectations for students in Levels I-IV, particularly in French.

### ***Experimentation***

Susan had a longtime interest in new or different ideas and materials for teaching languages. She described herself this way:

So I'm still experimenting, and as long as they're publishing books and writing manuals, I'll just keep experimenting. (Curr 3:21)

In fact, during the time of this study, the situation was no different. Susan was trying out two new things in her French III course: a new set of materials, a video-based approach called French in Action, and dialogue journals, a technique for written communication between teacher and students, an idea she picked up from observations and discussions with Jane.

### ***French in Action***

Her decision to experiment with French in Action in her school was prompted by her experiences with the materials during the summer, when she taught a beginning French course in a private school program. This school had these materials, and she had the opportunity.

I had received materials from the publisher, whoever the publisher is, and always felt it was too expensive, copied a couple lessons off public TV, and thought it was interesting. I remember when I first saw it, I thought there was too much teaching of grammar--Pierre Capretz talking about the language and all these little rules. I didn't want to see that. I wanted to sit there and enjoy the video. So when the opportunity came to work at The Bay School and use the series, I was thrilled, because now at last I could use it the way it was used at the school, and decide myself if that were the best approach to teaching French in Action. (Curr 3:18)

She included it in the French III curriculum as part of the grammar and conversation materials, in addition to other content she emphasized in that course. The centerpiece of the materials is an ongoing story line that involves a young American in France and his interactions and adventures with a French friend and her family. Throughout the fall, she worked at different ways of using French in Action, especially the video tapes.

I'm still experimenting, to be honest with you, as to where I want to stand, what I want to do while the video is playing. Basically, I don't want to be in the forefront. I don't want to be part of that. I want the video to be the material. So I felt more comfortable with the first part of the class, when I was sitting behind, and they were focused on the TV. Sometimes it's good to be there and point things out, and you're with them, and you're all together. But I felt more comfortable removed.

... But there's so much there visually. These videos are so rich. They're wonderful. The interest level is very high, I find, on the students' part. They're really seeing so much culture. They're seeing *Le Jardin de Luxembourg*--with the flowers, with the people there. Culturally, it's just wonderful. And, you could stop all the time, but yet, there are fifty-two episodes, so you obviously can't stop all the time. (Obs 1:2)





The richness of the video materials paralleled Susan's growing interest in the use of film as a teaching tool in both French and Spanish classes. She herself found watching films in French and Spanish a very powerful experience, and specific movies were already included in the binders as part of the course content and activities for each level. The French in Action package, however, contained more than just video tapes. There were also worksheets that featured grammar, vocabulary, and structured conversations. Part of Susan's experimentation was to explore the viability of working on these content areas through the video taped story line, and meshing it with the other content and activities in the French III course.

### *Dialogue Journals*

The other experiment that Susan undertook in the French II course was with dialogue journals. When asked why she decided to try out this technique, she answered this way:

Well, she [Jane] was doing it. She was correcting them one day. I said, "What are you doing?" "I'm correcting them." She was reading them and correcting them. I said, "Oh that's interesting." I was interested when I saw it. You know, I was interested when I first saw it, because I had had my students do journals. I would give them a theme, they would give a theme, write it, and I would correct it. But it wasn't a dialogue. It was just a journal. It was like my thoughts for the day. Then she mentioned it was a dialogue journal. And I saw some of her comments, and they were very personal--well not very personal, but they were personal. I looked at it, not from just that point of view, but also from the point of view that, boy, she has a lot of correcting to do. She had a class of...she was doing it with...well, I know she did it with French IV, but she also did it with some of her larger classes. Not French I, but French II. And I thought to myself, That's a lot to go through, write answers. I think she did it so she could leave them in school, so she wouldn't have to carry them back and forth. Just from the time point of view, taking up time to write them back, I must say at that point I really wasn't interested.

Then, after school one day, or during school, I said, "I would really like to read your [Master's thesis]." I feel if I'm working with her I'd like to know more about what she's written. I'm not sure if she said she read mine. Maybe she did. So I mentioned I would like to read it, and she brought it in and gave it to me. It sat here (points to a corner of the room). It's one of those things that with the daily goings-on, it's hard to make time for that. But I did before Christmas--it might have been Thanksgiving--I read it. I was interested. I was impressed. I thought a lot of thought had gone into this, a lot of work, a lot of experimentation, not just here but in France. She's really thought about it. She's tried various things. She's tried handing them out several times without giving feedback. She's tried giving them topics to write about. She's tried it with various size classes. So the more I read, the more interested I was, the more I realized that it was really a dialogue with the students, a continuing, running dialogue, not just a journal. I've always liked the idea of it not being corrected. I think I've done that in my own journal writing.

I have students that I really like a lot. By the time it gets to be the third or fourth year, you know them pretty well, and you like them, almost like your own kid. I thought this could be something I would like to do. I'd like to know some of my students a little bit better. I don't live with them, like somebody would in a boarding school. I don't do a lot of activities with them. I'm not a drama coach, who's with them after school in a more informal setting, or a band director, who's with them and just jokes around. I'm pretty much a classroom teacher, who sees them just a little bit, on the fringes. I'd like to know where they're at, what they're thinking. I think this is good. I think this opens up--I've already felt a closeness that I don't feel was there before. Just knowing about what they want to talk to me about is interesting. (Obs 3:5-6)



Susan initiated this experiment toward the end of the second marking period, in early January. Her account shows the interplay between her conceptions of her teacher role, content, activities, outcomes, as well as her relationships with students, and her new colleague, Jane. From these beginnings, Susan went on to experiment with the dialogue journals and to invite Jane to present the technique to the Foreign Language Teaching Forum, a group of local high school teachers.

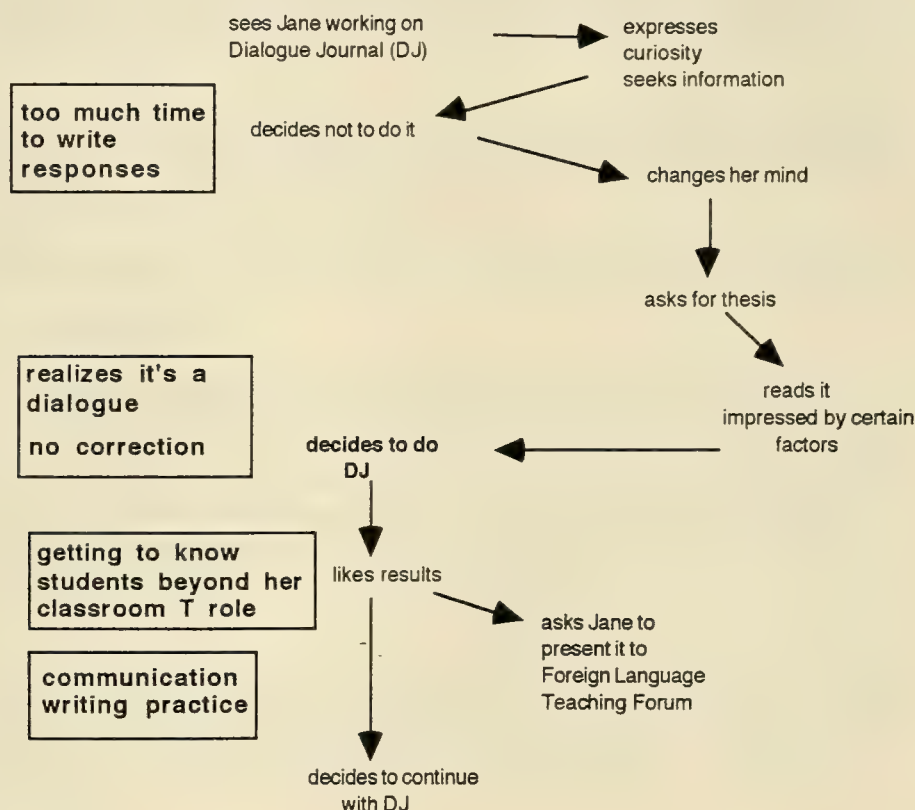


Figure 5: Incorporation of Dialogue Journals

As this diagram shows, Susan's experimentation with dialogue journals points to central features of her conception of French, namely her relationship with students and the importance of using the language to communicate about real things.

### Summary

To summarize the situation during this time period,

- Susan was in the midst of the latest phase of her long-standing mission to strengthen the language program in the school.
- As in past years, she struggled with the Guidance Department in order to schedule all language courses so that the maximum number of students could enroll. And, as in





her past dealings with Guidance, Susan needed to intervene and to make accommodations in the schedule so that students could take language courses.

- As in the past, this meant Susan's scheduling classes around lunch hours in different classrooms, and it also meant combining courses in one class period. Such accommodations limited Susan's ability to establish a strong program.
- As in the previous year, Susan found herself working with a new colleague, Jane. Like her predecessor, Jane was also seeking clarification and definition in the curriculum, in this case, specification of the required outcomes to pass from Level II to Level III in French. Thus continued the "dialogue" about curriculum requirements that had begun the previous year with Will.
- As in the past, the "freedom to pick and choose" and the experimentation that were essential to Susan's teaching emerged as an important feature that she wanted to maintain as part of a more defined curriculum. This year she was trying out video-based instructional materials, and dialogue journals.

In light of this situation, let us examine Susan Winston's conception of French.

### ***Conceptions of French***

To organize an examination of Susan's conception of French, I will describe in greater detail her views in each of the following dimensions: teacher role, students, content, activities, outcomes, and context. These dimensions are in a dynamic relationship with one another. This framework posits a teacher's conception of subject matter as a dynamic interaction of six dimensions: context, students, teacher roles, content, activities, and outcomes. The teacher's conception of French is thus a function of these interrelated dimensions.

In concrete terms, this means that a teacher defines the French to be learned as part of a perception of his or her role, students, the types of learning activities, and intended outcomes or results, all set within the possibilities and limitations of the school and classroom, and within relationships with colleagues in the Foreign Language Department.

In general terms, therefore, Susan's conception of the French she taught includes her interpretation of the curriculum and of French, her conceptions of her preferred teacher roles, her perceptions of students' attitudes and abilities, her intended learning outcomes, her choices of learning activities, and her interpretations of language program and school expectations. The broad descriptions above suggest an overall conception, but there was much more to Susan's conception of subject matter.

Let us now turn to a more detailed examination of each of these dimensions.

### ***Teacher Roles***

As a language teacher in this school, Susan embodies many roles, each reflecting a different dimension of her work. To be sure, there is overlap among these roles, and the differences are sometimes blurred. For the purposes of this examination, however, they are presented as distinct roles:

- learner/practitioner



- model
- advocate
- interested adult
- facilitator

### ***Learner/Practitioner***

As a learner/practitioner of French and Spanish, Susan consciously saw her job as furthering her abilities in these languages. In fact, when describing the importance of her relationship with her French cousin, Susan described her involvement with the language in a striking way:

But when I'm there, she's known that I've wanted to speak French, that that's what I do for a living. (Bio 3:6)

Speaking French "for a living" captured the influence of this perception of her role, namely, that Susan actively used it and that she saw it as an ongoing learning experience. Doing it as a living entailed more than just "speaking French," however, and her involvement in the language was reflected in a number of aspects of Susan's work as well as her life outside the school.

In terms of her work as a teacher, she was quite clear that teaching language meant both using it and learning more about it.

...in teaching things, you always learn them better yourself. You learn to speak better. You learn more vocabulary. (Bio 1:17)

I think perhaps teaching has been one of the best ways to increase my proficiency. I listen to tapes, I watch videos, I watch movies. I have to use it every day in class. One thing, when I first started teaching, I concentrated on the commands--keeping the language in the foreign language in class. So that I had to make sure that I knew all of those things. Pick the paper off the floor. Throw the gum in the basket. Or whatever I had decided I needed to be able to say in order to make class run smoothly. So teaching has been very valuable as far as helping me become more proficient. (Bio 2:2)

I feel that I've always been challenged, especially at the advanced levels, in literature or whatever we're doing--even grammar or activities--there's always been something new in my schedule. (Bio 3:12)

The opportunity to increase her proficiency was particularly true at the advanced levels, where her students "keep her challenged" (Bio 1:18), because they were moving into areas of the subject matter that Susan doesn't know as well. Again, she linked it to her perception of role:

I have enough interests and ability to teach what I'm teaching. But it is something, being a French teacher, that I would like to work on: just the ability to understand everything everywhere. But I don't feel worried about it. I feel like it's something that...it's a challenge. That's why I'm doing what I'm doing. I like teaching languages. I like teaching French and Spanish. It's an area for growth. There are always things I learn. Teaching is exciting, because students will say, How do you say this? And I'll say, Well we'll have to find out. I don't always have the answer. Sometimes there probably aren't answers; you can't translate everything from one language to another. It's something I'm interested in, and I see the challenge, without being overly worried about, Gee I don't speak like a native. (Bio 2:15)

Not only was teaching languages challenging, it was "an area for growth" and "exciting." In fact, Susan spoke of the importance of "constantly learning," and that this was like a source of nourishment to her, and of motivation to continue:





Well, I think that [teaching] has served to nourish. That has served to keep me going, that that's why I've been doing what I've been doing for so long, because I can open up a textbook, one of my textbooks that I use in class, and enjoy going through it. It's something that just feeds me. It changes enough so that I'm constantly learning. I'm learning either the language, or the culture, or new teaching techniques. (Curric 3:5)

### *Susan's Network*

The role of learner/practitioner extended beyond her classroom work to her "network" of colleagues and friends, with whom she practiced French. These included her regular contacts with her cousin Jeanne, whom she considered a "mentor" to her study of French culture, as well as her friend Brigitte in Dijon. Also included was the circle of Francophiles, Le Cercle, who met regularly to speak French and where "any chance to bring some aspect of the Francophone culture is welcomed" (Curric 3:2). She described one meeting:

It's fun to find out why people are here and why they speak French. Last time I went, it was at George's house, and I ended up in the living room with Maurice and Jacques and Pau.. They were all Swiss. At first I found myself--there was noise, I forgot what the noise was, but there was music, I think--and it was a little bit hard to hear what was being said. As I listened more, I found myself able to understand. The accent was slightly different, and I think part of it was that I'm not used to every day being surrounded by French. So it took a little bit, but after a few minutes, I felt comfortable. We discussed politics, France and U.S. relationships, the food, living in New York. We discussed a wide range of topics. I found that very enjoyable. (Curric 3:2)

When she described her experiences with native speakers of French, Susan did cast herself as a "good language learner," who is able to effectively cope in situations where she might not understand everything that was said.

I can go to Le Cercle, and understand. I go to Le Cercle three or four times a year, perhaps. I can go to France, and understand what's happening around me. Sometimes when I'm watching TV, I'll miss something, and I'll have to guess. But as a good language learner, I look at the situation--what's being talked about, the context, the gestures--and don't get frustrated. I just feel that every time you hear something, your ability to understand is increasing. There are words that I would miss in English, if I were following certain conversations, too. (Bio 2:15)

### *Passions and Interests in French*

This network also included sharing of ideas and teaching materials with fellow teachers of French and Spanish. In some instances, this went beyond a simple exchange of handouts and involved a re-focusing of Susan's interests in the subject matter. One significant instance involved her exposure to the use of cinema in the language classroom through a colleague in a nearby private high school.

I know having a friend who was really into videos, who taught video courses in French, French theater...A teacher, a friend, who taught...who teaches at The Bay School, and showed...used videos in the class. It was great, because it exposed me to a lot more films than I had ever seen before. And I know I started using videos a lot more in my class. I would now if we had a good camera. ... It was a very important thing. It was important from a lot of points of view. It's hard to put it in a nutshell, but for me, I enjoyed very much watching the movies in Spanish and French.

A lot of movies I hadn't seen. ... like *Manon des Sources*, *Jean de Florette*. There's just so many, and... *Jésus de Montréal*... I mean, there are so many good movies. They're the type that a sort of...they stay with you. They're just very, very impressive. And I know, I've taken students to see movies like *Como Agua Para Chocolate*, and they liked them. I think



something like that...It's sort of like the songs when I was in high school. They just strike a chord, and you can say, Boy, that's neat. To think, if I didn't know Spanish, I would miss so much. If I didn't know French, I wouldn't understand that little turn of phrase, or the subtleties. (Bio 1:20)

Beyond this network, Susan's involvement in the language also included personal ends, and her own relationship with the language, primarily through her interest in literature, movies, and the arts, as well as her love of travel.

I always wanted a Master's in literature, and I don't have it. It's something that I would like, but it was almost like for selfish reasons, just because I'd love to lose myself in French literature, or Spanish literature. (Bio 1:17)

It is my dream, I guess, to some time return to Paris and to live in a little *atelier* in Paris, and to just survive there, for a year. Or perhaps to go back and get my Master's, because I don't have it in French literature. That's something I think I would like to do. (Bio 2:15)

This passion for literature, kindled in her college years, now had an added significance, informed through Susan's increased ability in French along with her experiences teaching literature.

Now, I think I know more, as far as what is important to me. As far as French goes, I'm much more interested in just picking up a book and just reading an article about it. I have more time to do that, thinking about it, than [when] I was in college.

PM: About what?

Susan: About anything. Just picking up any book I have in my room and reading it, in French. I have lots of books. I have Racine. I have Molière. I have Colette. ... I honestly have read--because I had to in college. Whereas now, I've gone out on my porch with my book of Molière--I've been reading *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*--and just enjoyed it, just thought, This is wonderful. I like this. I like the characters, what a sense of humor. I wish I could have appreciated it that much when I was in college, when I was being told to read it. Get up in front of a class and give a little explanation of this work. It's more enjoyable now. I guess part of my goal is to--my soul-searching--is how do you transmit this to students? How do you get them to read for the pleasure of reading? (Bio 2:18)

Here, Susan made a direct connection between the power of her experiences reading in French, as a learner/practitioner, to her other role as a teacher of French. She wanted to pass on the power and pleasure of this kind of learning experience to her students. Also, thanks to her own teaching of literature in this school, she learned to appreciate it, and in turn, a sense of what she wanted to transmit to students.

### ***Model of Speaking French***

In terms of transmitting an image of French and Spanish to students, Susan had a very clear conception of what she intended:

It's something I'm interested in, and I see the challenge, without being overly worried about, Gee I don't speak like a native. Sometimes, I feel that's better. I'm not so hard on the students, saying, "You have to have this perfect accent. You're going to work on the r until you're...you hate it." I feel like I've gone through the learning, and I'm tolerant. I'm perhaps more tolerant than a native speaker would be. I'm tolerant because I studied Spanish, and learned Spanish. There are a lot of different accents.

The Spanish people are perhaps nicer about their language. If you speak it, and you make a mistake, they're tolerant and forgiving. You're communicating, so they love you. I'm sort of that way. You're trying, so I really appreciate it. But I feel that it's something important.





That's why I feel the videos are so valuable, because they show you authentic people in authentic situations. They show you people functioning in the language, and that's what my students want to do. I tell them, "You go to France, and don't be put off if they...if you ask a question in [French] and they answer you in [English]. Tell them, say: "I'm learning French. Can you speak to me in French?" Be honest about it.

It is a game. It is a game, when you can go into France...Pretty much, when I go to France, and I'm making my way around, people speak to me in French. It's very rare that I ask something in French, and they answer me in English. I feel like I can function, and that feels very good. I know I'm not a native, but I feel I can enjoy the language, enjoy the people, and be accepted for what I know. I feel that the level of acceptance is different in France. It's higher than in the Spanish countries. I feel like if you speak Spanish, there's less judgment--judgmental calls on how well you speak, your language, and your accent. But that's OK. It's nothing that...It's just part of the nature of the people...

I think my students are getting the right attitude, that they want to speak better. They do want to have a good accent, that it is important. We have in our classes a French boy, and that's helping. We have some teachers who like to speak French. We have two women who would love to teach French. They're English teachers, but they always have a full schedule, so they're not given French.

I feel that I am portraying the fact that it's fun to speak French. ... That it's a good thing to speak French, and it's good to speak with a good accent. (Bio 2:16)

What stands out in Susan's account is the relationship of her own successful experiences of functioning in French with native French speakers to that which she presents to students, that is, that it is "fun to speak French" and "that it's good to speak with a good accent." The importance of the good accent, in Susan's view, is linked to what she calls the "level of acceptance" accorded by the French. It's linked, in other words, to functioning in the language in France. Moreover, Susan explicitly links this functioning to the learner role, in that if one's accent and ability in French are not accepted, one should openly declare oneself a learner in order to facilitate acceptance.

All told, Susan modeled a number of dimensions:

- speaking with a good accent
- speaking French is fun
- gaining acceptance is possible
- seeing yourself as a learner
- connections with language and culture

### ***Advocate of Language Learning***

Via the role of advocate, Susan promoted the study of foreign languages. She did this in the school and outside the school in her work with professional organizations.

In the school, Susan was active in encouraging students to enroll in language courses, pushing for scheduling changes to make increased enrollment possible, overseeing the language and cultural activities of the Language Club at the school, including organizing and conducting the annual spring field trip abroad, and taking advantage of any opportunities to enhance foreign languages.





Susan's encouraging students to enroll in foreign language classes was closely linked to prevailing expectations and attitudes toward foreign language study. First of all, foreign languages were elective courses, and not required for graduation. For college-bound students, however, Guidance recommended two years of foreign language study. Susan's advocacy thus involved convincing students to take a third and a fourth year.

They're told in Guidance that they should have two years for college, so that's why, I'm sure, that we have a pretty big drop off after two years. I've tried to combat that with handouts that I've gotten from college catalogues. When my daughter was applying to colleges last year, I went through a lot of them, and every time I saw three years recommended, I pulled it out. I made a handout to students--in fact, that might be a good thing to get out about now, because they're starting to think about it--which said that three years was preferred. It's a pretty competitive business, applying to colleges. So, when you tell students anything that will make you stand out is better, and to let the colleges know that you've challenged yourself will help you. For some of them, I think it has made a difference. We have had students taking Level III who in the past would not, I'm sure. But it's hard to get them to the Level IV, because by the time they get to be seniors, they want more free time. Languages in our school, for fourth year, are offered seventh period. ... That would be a nice period to sit back and relax. And, some of them have jobs, which means that they'd get out of school earlier. So our biggest problem is keeping them in third and fourth year. (Curric 1:14)

Despite some successes in encouraging students to continue language study, Susan saw this as an uphill battle, even if students were planning to go to college. Other demands intruded, especially students' after-school jobs.

Beyond the relevance of college, however, Susan had a difficult time conveying the usefulness of foreign languages. In part, she faulted the lack of integration of these courses with the rest of the high school curriculum, but she also recognized that foreign languages were seen as unnecessary by students.

The weakness of the program is that it's perhaps not integrated enough with the other courses at school. Students don't see languages as being relevant or necessary. It's sort of a fringe type thing. If you want to take it, it's fun. It might look good on a resume, but it's not going to really help you in life. That's a hard thing to combat.

A "hard thing to combat" indeed. Such a generalized attitude toward foreign languages didn't really have anything to do with Susan's teaching per se. Yet, she did take it as a personal challenge and responsibility, viewing students' not enrolling for further study as her inability to convince them of the relevance of foreign languages. Susan described her reactions to such a situation the previous year in a Spanish class:

I was very disappointed in my Spanish II class from last year, that more boys didn't continue. I think, What could I have done? What could I have done differently? Did I not talk about how useful it was enough? I know I did. Did we not have enough fun? You go through a lot of soul searching as to, How could I make it better? What could I do differently? I think, as a teacher, you do that with every class. At least I tend to be critical in that I look back and say, "How could it be better?" Perhaps I do that more than I look at what's good. I think that's the hard thing. That's the real challenge for a foreign language teacher: to make people see how it's relevant, and let them know that it's worth continuing into the third and fourth year. That's hard, because it's hard sometimes even to convince them, because they're going to tell you, "I have five classes. If I take languages, I won't have a study hall. I have a job." I wish high school students didn't have to have jobs. I think that's really too bad. I wish we could concentrate more on school and on learning. (Curric 2:15)



Another manifestation of Susan's advocacy of foreign languages was through her work with the Language Club at the school. The Club carried out a number of activities, many of which were directly related to foreign languages, such as sponsoring a scholarship fund for a graduate who continued foreign language study in college. Others involved cultural and international activities, like the annual trip abroad, the Peace Corps pen pal exchange, the Amnesty International chapter, organizing cultural excursions, and visits of people from other cultures to the school.

It's [The Language Club] got a lot of members. We have probably thirty-five members. We do projects with the Peace Corps. We give them 250 dollars every year, and then we have a...what do you call it, a Peace Corps partner. They send us pictures. Last year, we sent the money, and they...it went towards... Well, we pick out the project. I have this student who's in charge of it, and they read the various project descriptions, and they present four to the club, which we vote on. Last year, we picked a school in Grenada...that needed new tiles. The person who was the Peace Corps correspondent sent us pictures when it was done, of the tiles...of the little children who must have been four or five years old, sitting in chairs, because they couldn't sit on the ground, the dirt. When the project was done, the floor was all tiled, and they were sitting on the tiled floor. It was great. ...

We do the Peace Corps project. We do Amnesty, but we don't do as much as I'd like. I'd love to have more of an Amnesty program. We do...We usually go out to dinner and see a movie at the end of the year. We take a trip. Usually we go to Mexico, or France, or Canada. We also do things that come up. We've gone to the Experiment to see the cultural events. I think we saw *A Peasant of El Salvador* (a play). And then, if anyone in our club has certain talents, we like to have them present those talents. We had a girl last year who was from Sampan, and who was very good at dancing. She did a dance. She danced for us. (Bio 1:4)

Taken together, such activities and pursuits reflected not only Susan's advocacy of foreign languages, but her interest in enlarging students' horizons, in encouraging them to think, to expand their minds, to learn more about mankind:

I think we can have fun with the language in class, and teach them, and get them to be proficient, but when you take them beyond, up to that higher level, that they're into experiencing something that's really neat, that's being challenged. It could be their views on, you know, Nazi occupation of France, or anything like that, it just...It stays with them, and it's a learning experience. I guess...I felt that, and I'd like my students to feel that, too.

PM: Going beyond, you called it. Beyond...?

Susan: [Beyond]...just everyday functioning. Lifting you up. I don't know, making...expanding your mind, making you think. Or learning. Just learning more about mankind. (Bio 1:20)

Outside the school, Susan's was active as a member of the language teaching profession, primarily through her participation in the Foreign Language Teaching Forum discussions and her activities as part of the state certifying board for certification of foreign language teachers.

The Foreign Language Teaching Forum sessions were organized for high school teachers of foreign languages in this part of the state by French and Spanish professors at a nearby state college. They were informal gatherings at the college, held every month, where a variety of topics were addressed. Curriculum coordination between high school and college was one such topic:





We talk about coordinating curriculum, and coming up with standards for each level. ... Articulation between high school and college. What do students need to know at each level so that they can very easily get into the college program without having to be re-tested, and re-tested. Every school has a different program, and what you learned in one school is different from another school. (Obs 1:19)

Susan's participation on the state certifying board involved reviewing candidates' qualifications for certification in teaching French. These candidates were applying for certification based on life and work experiences, as opposed to obtaining it through the traditional academic route. The state foreign language consultant contacted Susan when these applications occurred, and she traveled to the state capitol to interview candidates as a member of the board. This made her "feel competent...in the language" (Curric 2:2).

The above roles of learner/practitioner, model, and advocate reflected Susan's involvement with the foreign languages she uses and teaches. The following roles reflect her relationships with students.

### ***Interested Adult***

In this role, Susan established the kind of relationship with students that she believes would foster their learning. Essentially, this entailed showing interest in students' lives, sharing her own, in an atmosphere where learning was fun yet taken seriously, as work, in effect. This role was one that evolved over the years, as Susan gradually expanded her emphasis from getting work done to include "getting to know the students better," a shift she attributed to her own "maturing" (Curric 1:18).

Susan described the fundamental importance of taking an interest in students:

When you take an interest in them, and are interested in their games, and their lives, and their songs, and that type thing, they're going to be a lot more tied in to what they're learning. (Curric 1: 18)

If you're not interested in what they're interested in, then it's hard some times to really communicate, and to be a good listener and just find out what are their concerns. Then that very often opens the door, and they want to learn better, too. That helps. (Bio 3:14)

It was not a one-way show of interest, however, as Susan saw it. She, too, needed to share in order to motivate students to learn. As she put it:

Maybe just those few minutes the teacher spends telling a joke, or laughing at themselves, or something funny in class--probably those little moments are very, very important in determining the students' attitude and desire to learn the foreign language. (Bio 3:14)

This kind of personal sharing came with time, experience, and being older. Susan describes how she created "a barrier" between students and herself, and how she eventually overcame this:

I think it happened gradually. I think when I started, I looked very young. I felt I was apt to not be taken seriously, so I had to maintain a gulf between myself and the students. Sometimes that created--I put a barrier there. I don't know if that was good or bad, because I think respect is important, too. That's something I feel like I've always had, which is the respect of the students. But I think now I'm more able to say, "Gee my dog has to go to the vet." Or, "My daughter won a field hockey game." I'm able to share some of those things, because I feel less threatened by closeness in



age. That's nice in a way. Because if you do let down your guard, and you can share some things, then they will respond. (Bio 3:14)

The interest in students and willingness to share her own experiences with them was still tied to learning.

I think learning should be fun, but at the same time, it has to be taken seriously. It's work. Learning is work, too. Especially a foreign language. It's not something you're going to pick up immediately. You're constantly being called on to perform what you know. I've heard that it's the most difficult subject. I don't know how many people agree with that, but it can be. I think it can be as difficult as one decides to put...as much effort as one decides to put into it. (Bio 3:13)

This relationship with students, evinced through Susan's role of interested adult, portrayed the importance of knowing students as persons, sharing some of herself as a person, yet done as a function of learning, which could be enjoyable, but was also work which needed to be done: "A work ethic, but at the same time, we can have fun while we're doing it" (Bio 3:15).

This kind of relationship could open up into another dimension, especially for students who continued foreign language study into a third or fourth year. Susan described how her use of the dialogue journal with her French III students allowed her to get to know students even more leading to a "closeness" that was not present previously.

I have students that I really like a lot. By the time it gets to be the third or fourth year, you know them pretty well, and you like them, almost like your own kid. I thought this [dialogue journal] could be something I would like to do. I'd like to know some of my students a little bit better. I don't live with them, like somebody would in a boarding school. I don't do a lot of activities with them. I'm not a drama coach, who's with them after school in a more informal setting, or a band director, who's with them and just jokes around. I'm pretty much a classroom teacher, who sees them just a little bit, on the fringes. I'd like to know where they're at, what they're thinking. I think this [dialogue journal] is good. I think this opens up-- I've already felt a closeness that I don't feel was there before. Just knowing about what they want to talk to me about is interesting.

(Obs 3:8)

### ***Facilitator of Student Performance***

This role characterized Susan's approach to involving students in learning activities. Essentially, she chose activities that had students working with their attention on the material, not on her, so that she was not "in the forefront" (Obs 1:2).

I like to see them working. I like to see them performing without me. (Obs 3:9)

In large part, this role was related to Susan's view of language learning as "performing," in that students were constantly asked to "perform" what they knew.

Learning is work, too. Especially a foreign language. It's not something you're going to pick up immediately. You're constantly being called on to perform what you know. (Bio 3:13)

This concept of the facilitator role was also related to Susan's view that students needed to be the focus of her attention, not her own performance as a teacher. By putting the students and their performance in the forefront, Susan had to play the facilitator role, devising and conducting learning activities that achieved this end. She described how she came to this realization, through her experience in the Master's program in 1986-87:





I guess one of the big...one of the big changes was going through the Master's program. It doesn't take much to kind of put a seed in somebody's head, how to see things differently, and maybe just a comment in getting there, such as...not look at your performance, but look at your students' performance. Look at your students more. I feel that that was one thing that made a lot of difference. It empowered them.

I think my first few years I was so worried about being here and being prepared, presenting a lesson, that I didn't sit back and just see, What can they do? I think more and more I do that. Even today, I know I did that more. Today my students in Spanish Three and Four brought in products--shampoo, mouthwash, whatever--and they talked about it. Like a little sales pitch. It's so good just to sit back and see them doing more of the work. I think that was the big difference in my teaching. (Bio 1:16)

To "sit back and see them doing more of the work" was the essence of this role. As we will see, this involved a number of choices about content and activities.

In summary, Susan undertook her job of teaching French and Spanish in this school through a number of related but distinct roles

### ***Students***

Susan's view of students was linked to her conceptions of her teacher role, to a great extent. She saw them in three broad perceptions:

- as serious learners
- in terms of their aptitudes and abilities in the language
- as interesting and likable persons

### ***Serious Learners***

Students who opted for foreign language courses usually did so because they were interested in going on to college. Susan geared the curriculum accordingly, and she did expect that students do the required work. As a result, she saw students as "serious" learners prepared to shoulder the "responsibilities" in her courses.

I think they realize once they sign up for the language, that it is work. That you have homework. That you work in class, whether you're taking notes, or you take quizzes and tests. I think the students that it's not just come in, have fun, leave, and there's no responsibility. I think they do realize there are responsibilities. (C2:4)

I think the majority of them are going on to college. For several reasons. In Guidance, they're told they need it for college. It is...an elective. They don't have to have it. It's an added course. The fact that there's homework makes a difference. There is homework. In some electives--they could take art, home ec, or shop, and there would not be homework. So it perhaps attracts a student who's more serious. (Curric 2:6)

Students were thus expected, in Susan's view, to be serious about the "work" of learning a foreign language, especially because they were headed to college.

Being a serious learner, however, was not just linked to the work required for college. She viewed her students as serious about the "idea of learning," who "like to learn," particularly the new and different things associated with foreign languages.

I really don't see a big difference between the French and the Spanish students. If we're talking about the mentality of the language student, why they take a foreign language, I think it's the attraction to the language, the attraction to something exotic, the foreign culture, the idea of learning. Those students who like to learn, who like to learn about geography, who



like to learn about politics, literature, who are attracted by the idea perhaps of learning about those things in the foreign language. (Curric 2:4)

Such a student "mentality" was not really linked to a specific language, as Susan saw it. Rather, she viewed it as a generalized "attraction to something exotic" that the students brought to her courses, solidly connected to learning. Notice, however, the reference to geography, politics, literature, which Susan associated with foreign language study. These content elements are discussed later in this chapter.

In addition to this attraction to learning, Susan saw her students as prepared to "function" and "perform" in the language, which was what she believed language learning was about. For this, students needed to be "daring," in her eyes.

When you take a foreign language, you know that you're going to have to function in that language. You're going to have to perform, and I think that idea of being daring is there, and that that might be a quality. (Curric 2:5)

Such were the attributes of serious learners. Once students entered the third and fourth years of study, they were indeed serious about their studies. However, pressures interfered or otherwise competed for students' time and energy. Essentially, these were two: prevailing attitudes toward learning and toward foreign languages, and after-school jobs.

For the serious learners planning for college, a third or fourth year of foreign language study was of secondary importance to other courses. Students with strong language abilities often decided not to continue in order to have time for other courses. Susan described one student in this situation:

He's a very bright boy. He's at Bentley [College] now. I'm sure he didn't take Spanish his senior year. He told me, "I wish I had, but I was just so worried. I also had physics, and I had calculus, and I had humanities, and I just felt I needed the study hall." I was saddened not to have him as a student his senior year, because he was a good student. He did very well with language. He took three years, and did well. (Curric 1:16)

She described another strong student who sought to limit her involvement in the Language Club trip because of pressures of other courses and an after-school job:

I was very disappointed the other day. Jane and I had spoken about giving the students going to Europe topics to research, and put them in pairs, and have them present little presentations at our meetings. I mentioned this to perhaps one of our brightest students in the whole school, and she became very upset. She said, "I can't do any more. I've got too much. I'm burned out now." She got all A pluses on her report card, and she said, "I have no time. I have a job." I said, "Well there's Christmas vacation. There's February vacation." She said, "I just don't have time." I was very disappointed. I thought, If somebody's spending over a thousand dollars to go to Europe, they should make time, because that will make their trip so much more valuable. (Curric 2:15)

As noted earlier, Susan attributed these student reactions to prevailing attitudes toward languages:

Students don't see languages as being relevant or necessary. It's sort of a fringe type thing. If you want to take it, it's fun. It might look good on a resume, but it's not going to really help you in life. That's a hard thing to combat. (Curric 2:15)

That's the real challenge for a foreign language teacher: to make people see how it's relevant, and let them know that it's worth continuing into the third and fourth year. That's hard, because it's hard sometimes even to convince them, because they're going to tell you, "I have five classes. If I take languages, I won't have a study hall. I have a job." I wish high school





students didn't have to have jobs. I think that's really too bad. I wish we could concentrate more on school and on learning. (Curric 2:15)

Thus, even though Susan viewed her students as serious learners, this view was tempered by her recognition that students really did not see languages as "relevant or necessary." As a result, they tended to opt for spending more time on other courses they deemed more relevant. Susan also admitted, somewhat ruefully, that students' after-school jobs detracted from their ability to put time into their studies, leading to a lack of concentration "on school and on learning."

Another dimension of this conception of students as serious learners involved the nature of language learning itself. Susan assumed that successful language learners shared certain characteristics, such as a "low level of frustration" and "a willingness to guess at things" (Curric 2:6).

I think that the students who do the best are those who have a lower level of frustration. If you have a high level of frustration, and you have to understand everything around you, or you get uncomfortable, you might have a harder time in the foreign language. I think you have to be able to guess at things, and go with the flow. I don't want to say not be afraid to make a mistake, because that would probably be giving foreign language students too much credit, but that does help, if you're willing to raise your hand and be wrong. (Curric 2:5)

Indeed, because of the nature of foreign language learning, in Susan's view, students were best seen as engaged in a "lifelong process of learning":

I hope that they learn enough of the foreign language so that they feel they are not intimidated by the foreign culture so that they can go there and feel comfortable using the language, but also realize that they're not going to understand everything, that it's a lifelong process of learning. That's important--to be able to have experiences in the foreign language, to be able to ask for something, to be able to get on the bus, or to not feel completely lost if people don't understand. (Curric 1:15)

As a matter of fact, Susan considered that students communicating with the French ought to openly identify themselves as learners, serious about the language, serious about learning it:

I tell them, You go to France, and don't be put off if they...if you ask a question in [French] and they answer you in [English]. Tell them, say: "I'm learning French. Can you speak to me in French?" Be honest about it. (Bio 2:16)

This was as much related to Susan's view of language learning as it was to the particularities of the French, who tend to be quite attentive to how their language is spoken. Susan's solution was that students needed to address this head on by seeing themselves as learners, a perception she specifically emphasized in her teaching.

Beyond these generalized conceptions of learning languages, Susan also looked closely at individual students and their particular "idiosyncrasies" as learners.

Here, she described her French II student, Karine:

*Sieste*, siesta--it's not hard. She seemed to have a hard time with that. She wanted to know it. She wanted to make sure that what she had was absolutely correct. Sometimes it's easier for a language learner, if they're able to go along with it and say, "Yeah I think it's right. Let's go on." She dwells sometimes on things and makes sure--she's a very conservative learner--that she has it correct, which is good, too. I've been very happy with her this year--it's my first year having her as a student--with her attention to detail. She puts in all her accents, all her *traits d'union*. She's very good about that. I'm not that type. I'm not as attentive to detail as she is. Everybody has their own style, and I guess I try to accommodate it, but at the same time, not indulge too much in each person's individual idiosyncrasies. (Obs 1:4)



### ***Aptitude for Language***

In addition to viewing students as serious learners, Susan perceived them in terms of their aptitude in languages, their ability to learn it. She drew a distinction between those who do "very well in language" or who are "strong" (Bio 2:9), and those who are "weak" or "more limited in their abilities" (Curric 2:6).

The impact of one extreme or the other was substantial:

I don't know. It's hard to say as a language teacher. Is that the right thing, to weed out those that are weak, so that you can have a super class and go on? I think that's a problem, and I know I'm not the only one faced with it. I've heard of teachers at The Bay School that have the same concerns, and thinking that maybe it's better that students not continue, that once they reach a certain point, maybe that's good for them. (Bio 2:9)

Students with limited abilities in language, realistically speaking, may only be able to "reach a certain point" beyond which "maybe it's better that [they] not continue." The "super class," in the meantime, was free to simply "go on." Susan acknowledged this disparity in aptitude as a "problem," yet she also wondered whether the solution of separation was the "right thing" to do. Nonetheless, Susan did see students in terms of levels of aptitude, and she connected this aptitude to course content and outcomes.

She spelled out these connections in this way:

I would love to see just a conversation course. I would love to have a big enough department so that we could offer a course in just conversation, a course that would be more for everyone. I feel bad sometimes that everyone is not exposed to foreign language, but I would hate to have to make everyone take it at the level that it is offered, because I think there are students who are more limited in their abilities, who would have a hard time with the program the way it is set up now. At the same time, I wouldn't want to water the program down so that those students who want to go to college and who want to at least get into an intermediate course in college would feel like they couldn't get in, or would find that they didn't get in, because they hadn't learned enough. So I think that's perhaps the way to go.

Maybe languages aren't for everyone, but gee, as a language teacher, I think it is nice to learn some foreign language. At least you know what it is when people talk about what it is to speak a foreign language. (Curric 2:6)

Here, Susan's notion of a "course in just conversation" that "would be more for everyone" stood in sharp contrast to the "program the way it is set up now," designed to help college-bound students get into intermediate-level undergraduate courses. Even though there were these differences in abilities, Susan did believe that everyone ought to learn something in a foreign language.

A course designed more for "everyone," where students were exposed to foreign languages and came away with an idea of "what it is to speak a foreign language" still begged the question of the relevance of foreign languages for those students who were not college-bound. Even if such a course could be instituted, the dilemma would still remain: foreign language learning was not seen as relevant. For example, in describing a school committee devoted to preparing graduates to enter the work force, Susan herself had a hard time seeing the relevance of foreign language study for this group of students:

We do have what they call a Tech-Prep, a group that's trying to work on those students in the middle. We feel we do a good job with the college-bound students. We feel we do a good job with those with little...with special ed needs. But for the ones in the middle, who drop out or leave school and do not go on to college, we feel





like we're not preparing them to start work, right in a profession. So we're starting now to brainstorm. The feeling is that we should ask employers in the area, What do you want to see in your future employees? How should we be preparing these students for jobs? As plumbers? Carpenters? Electricians? For work in the big companies around here...? What are they looking for that will make our grads stand out? I'm on this committee. I did not offer to chair it, because I'm just having a hard time seeing how foreign language fits into all this, but I'm going on November 8th, I think, to Centerville for a Tech-Prep meeting. I've heard that foreign languages can be tied into these curricula, but I haven't found out how yet. (Bio 3:19)

These extremes of "strong" and "weak" aptitudes notwithstanding, Susan also saw students with varying degrees of ability at all levels in her classes, so it was an ongoing factor that she had to handle, especially at the advanced levels. In her French III class, for example, she had two students, one of whom spoke French at home, and therefore knew much more French than his classmate. Differences such as these were not just differences emanating from what students had learned in previous courses, but were rather linked to abilities, in Susan's eyes.

When you get to the advanced levels, there's such a difference in ability, sometimes. It's not what you taught them. Sometimes, they're just so much more capable of handling things, depending on the class. (Curric 2:10)

Student ability or aptitude was thus a critical perspective that Susan used in her overall conception of students, which in turn affected what she taught them.

At the same time, distinctions were not always sharply defined. A student might have aptitude yet not be a serious learner, at least in terms of going on to college. Susan described a student in her Spanish class, who had exceptional ability yet was not seen as "college material":

... the other girl got the Spanish award last year. She's got a wonderful memory. Better than I do. She'll come in every day with a new *modismo*, and she'll write it on the board. ... Like, *Tengo un tío que toca la guitarra*--I have an uncle who plays the guitar means something like...uh...What's your point? She loves little expressions like that. Isn't that cute? ... You know, Like haven't we met before? She came in one day with..."Haven't we slept in the same bed?"

She's fun, but she's incredible, because she'll pull these out in the middle of class. She'll pull out one of these expressions she's looked up and put on the board. ... She'll use it correctly, too.

... Employ it. ... So, it's really inside of her. It's not just something she wrote for one day and forgot. Which I'll let her explain it to the class, and we'll laugh about it. But I don't always remember her expressions. She will. She'll remember them, and then she will use them in class. It's amazing to me.

I think she's got a lot of potential, and it doesn't always show up in her grades, in her report card. She flunked a course last year. I know there are people who think that she's not really college material. I think that's kind of sad. I would love to see her get into State College, to go to Quito, or to go to...or you know, to major in languages. I don't know if she's going to do that, though. She might just stop high school and get a job, which would be kind of sad, because I would like to see her be challenged. (Bio 1:19)

This student, in Susan's perception, had an amazing ability in the language, strong aptitude. Yet her status as a serious learner, namely, her capacity to achieve in other courses, was questionable, for she did not seem to have what it took to go on to college.



### ***Nice and Interesting People***

Susan was straightforward in this particular conception of students in her classes:

I like my students. I think they're nice people. (Bio 5:5)

This view was connected to her interest in them as persons with interests and lives of their own. As noted, Susan saw this as a critical dimension of her teaching, in that it "opens the door" to their learning.

At the same time, her interest was genuine, not merely a pedagogical contrivance. She described her communication with one student, Pierre, through dialogue journaling:

It's practice writing, first of all, I would say. I don't want to say it's to open up communication with me. I think that would be kind of misleading, because I feel with the dialogue journals, one never knows where it's going to go, or if it's going to continue to be successful. It could suddenly stop feeling right, and I might just not do it for a while. But as long as we're communicating, and there's a certain amount of effort on their part to talk about things that matter to them, then I'm interested.

I feel that's the case right now. Pierre loves cars. He loves racing. He would love to do that as a profession. Honestly, I've always wanted to drive a car real fast. I've always wanted to drive in a race myself. I can identify with that. So, I ask him questions like, "What about safety? What about speed?" He says, "*Les automobiles sont bien construites.*" He's thought of that, and he says they wear the right equipment. We're really communicating about something we both care about, which is good for him ... It's good for me because I feel that I'm learning things about them. I haven't reached the point where I'm saying this is good or bad. I don't know if it will, maybe it won't. But he's just sort of passing ideas by me. One thing I asked is that they always ask me a question. So, "Do you like to race? Have you ever seen a race? Have you ever..?" And I have. I've been to Monte Carlo, which I plan to talk about next time.

So, practice in writing, and probably establishing a rapport. Finding out what they're interested in, and vice versa. (Curric 3:2)

This mutual interest in cars, the rapport that Susan and Pierre established through this written conversation, was an instance of "really communicating about something we both care about."

Even when a mutual topic is not there, the interest was. Susan described her communication with a second student through the dialogue journal:

With Monique, it's kind of hard right now, because she's feeling very stressed. It's hard for me exactly to know how to respond to her. She probably needs more than I can give her, as far as feedback, as far as how she's feeling. Maybe it's just a period she's going through, that will pass. But, in a way, I guess, it's good that she does know that I know how she's feeling, so that if she wants to come and talk to me, that it's open. I'm certainly not going to pry or try to get her to divulge more than she should, but she knows that I'm aware. (Curric 3:2)

In this instance, Susan showed interest in the form of acknowledgment of Monique's message about her feelings of stress, yet chose not to pursue it as a topic of conversation in the journal out of respect for Monique's feelings and her privacy, as well as Susan's own hesitation about her ability to comment appropriately on these feelings.

Thus, Susan's view of students as nice and interesting people reflected her desire to find out about them, their interests and concerns, in order to communicate with them.

If you're not interested in what they're interested in, then it's hard some times to really communicate, and to be a good listener and just find out what are their concerns. (Bio 3:15)





This view didn't necessarily involve discussion of shared topics of interests or students' intimate feelings, but, along with humor and small talk, was rather one dimension of what Susan called a "good relationship with the students"

I have students who are much better than my daughter at telling a joke, or being funny, or trying to get me to laugh. Actually, that's probably very helpful. I can't think right now, but there's one girl who will say to me, "Oh gee, where were you last night? How come you didn't come to the game?" Or things like that, just in a joking manner. Or, "How's your dog?" It's fun. A little bit of that can go a long way towards a good relationship with the students. (Bio 3:14)

## **Content**

As the creator of the foreign language "program" in both French and Spanish, Susan was able to articulate what students were to concentrate on for each of the four levels. Over the years, she had established a clear sense of what students needed to learn at each of these levels. Susan had a global view, from Level I through IV, that she had developed after almost twenty years in the school. In her mind, she organized it all according to an image of increasing ability to function in the language, a spiral ascension.

Prior to the coming of her official part-time colleagues, Susan had established a flexible curriculum drawn from textbooks and other materials that she had collected, and based on her sense of what she wanted to do each year, and her ability to pick and choose.

I've always kept my materials that I use in manila folders in the filing cabinet, and pretty much kept them according to the class that I was teaching. I pretty much use the textbook at Level I and II, and then at Level III and IV, just continued on with what I thought they should know. It was pretty random at the beginning. There was no set program.

When I started teaching, there were new textbooks, some readers at the advanced level, the DC Heath series--which are really quite good--little playlets on the Count of Monte Cristo. Little stories, high interest, like *La Tulipe Noire*. Little stories that the students liked. We used those. But there was no set program.

Teaching, transferring from French to Spanish, I did not come up with a set curriculum. I kept all my papers for one class in each folder. I pretty much knew what I wanted to do, on my own. At the end of the year, I would go through and make sure all the papers for that class were in the folder. So, I could choose. I felt good about that. I felt I had the freedom to pick and choose. I didn't have to follow a set curriculum. (Curric 1:5)

The arrival of her colleague Will led to the establishment of "binders" for each level and language, where materials were collected and organized according to the four quarters of the academic year. Even with this re-organization in place, Susan still viewed the curriculum as "constantly changing," saying that "I don't think we've completely found what works" (Curric 3:19). While some elements were changeable, others were more established.

When asked to describe the program, Susan gave an extended summary of all four levels for both French and Spanish. The excerpts follow:



Level I:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- sounds of the language</li> <li>- basic greetings</li> <li>- functioning in the language</li> <li>- the present tense</li> <li>- the near future</li> <li>- the recent past</li> <li>- names/vocabulary</li> <li>- a little of the past tense</li> <li>- a little of the future tense</li> <li>- project on foreign country</li> <li>- other project topics</li> </ul>	<p>...in Level I, they're getting used to the sounds of the language. They're getting used to just basic greetings, at the beginning: Hello, How are you, and weather, time, functioning in the language, talking about the things around them. They're getting used to speaking in the present tense, talking about what they do each day, their schedule, what classes they take, their activities, their family. The circle just seems to get a little bit larger. They talk about other people and what they're doing. They start to interact with each other, do a lot of work in groups. They get so they can ask questions, and they can use the near future: I'm going to...study, and then the recent past: I have just...entered the store, or whatever. They learn store names. They start learning professions, some of the most common professions. Animals, houses, rooms of the house, colors, clothing. Informally, we do more, as I told you, they might learn a little bit of the past tense, a little bit of the future here and there. We try to...traditionally, I've done a project on one of the foreign countries, where that language is spoken, where French or Spanish is spoken. They very often will do Who am I projects, talking about themselves to the whole class. They do a project of their choice, and that's in the spring, which means they can do...I try to correlate that with the Foreign Language Week, although it sometimes comes a little bit later--so from a chart of Level I projects, they can do an alphabet book, they can cook something and present it to the class and talk about the ingredients, they can do a little video of a dialogue where they try to sell something--a publicity for a bag of chips, or a basketball. That's pretty much what we do the first year.</p>

*I put "weak" here. I think what I mean by that is if I were to list all the things I teach in Level I, there might be more.*

Level II	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- review of Level I</li> <li>- the preterit tense</li> <li>- the future tense</li> <li>- the foreign country a whole culture</li> <li>- project on foreign country</li> </ul>	<p>In the second year, they review all of that. They review the different types of verbs in the present. They do a lot of review of prepositions. They review the near future, the recent past. Then they are introduced to the preterit: I did this... in a variety of verbs, all of those verb tenses. Usually, they get to the future at the end of the Level II, the real future, the formal future.</p> <p>In Level II last year, we studied Mexico. We had studied Canada. . . . Those neighbors that are close to us, so you can study a whole culture, and study it in depth, where students can do a project on a state in Mexico, and talk about the state, and bring in something--a dance, or some clothing, or some music.</p>

For Levels I and II, Susan "pretty much uses the textbook," in this case the series published by D.C. Heath, French for Mastery I and II<sup>2</sup>. She used it primarily for the grammatical dimension:

It provides the structure, a basic structure, a good enough structure that I'm happy with the fact that they're getting good things they know--they're getting good things. More and more, perhaps, I use their activities less. I pick and choose, but I do basically follow the order in which they present the grammatical structures. (Curric 2:14)

In fact, grammar plays a pivotal role in Susan's conception of content:

<sup>2</sup> French for Mastery I&II. 1990. Jean-Paul Valette & Rebecca Valette. D.C. Heath: Lexington, MA.





..pretty much the grammar comes first, when you're talking in these terms, because they pretty much indicate the performance level of the students. (Curric 3:5)

*For Level II, grammatically, the content is higher than that. There's also reflexive verbs, the imperfect. There's food, clothing. We do concentrate on France and on Mexico, as far as Level II. So, I think there's more--grammatically--than there is here. I don't think I had a list in front of me when we were talking, it was pulling things off the top of my head. I don't know if this is quite fair. I would want it to reflect that they really do do quite a bit, especially in Level II. (Epilogue: 5/8/96)*

### Level III:

- the imperfect tense
- the preterit tense
- the subjunctive

Then, in Level III, we pretty much go into the imperfect and the preterit, and contrast the two, and get so they can feel comfortable using those two tenses. The book I have now for Level III goes right into the subjunctive at the beginning of the year, which kind of surprises me, but I was talking to the Level IV class today, and it was surprising how much they remembered. . . . I guess I'm happy with that--the subjunctive--introduction at Level III. The future conditional.

- the future conditional

- cultural readings

Then in the spring, we try to...Level III--before we get to the spring--is nice, because we get into some of the little short readings, the cultural readings of what's happening in other countries.

- project on foreign country

Then in Level III, they pick a country they're from. They're from Mexico, or they're Juan Valdez from Colombia, or whatever. So they're from that country, and they research that country, and they tell us all about their country. That's their project. Some look like a test. They stand up in front of the class, pull down the map, talk about: "This is my country. These are the borders. I live here. The country is..." the climate, and a little bit about the history. The history is good, because it forces them to use a little bit of the preterit and the imperfect. I don't overkill with that either. I say, "Talk a little bit about the history, enough so that I can see that you're using the past tenses."

- the history of the country

- compound tenses

Then, in the spring, we try to get into the compound tenses: the conditional past, the future past--those type things. We continue reading short little stories. We've read, in past years, The Little Prince in French and in Spanish, at Level III.

- short stories

The contrast between the preterit and the imperfect was an important content area:

From what I've seen in other schools, and from what Will and I discussed, it seems like they should be working on not the formation of the *passé composé* and the *imparfait*, but how to use them together, how to speak in the past and talk about what was happening when something occurred. Or, they want to say: "When I was twelve years old," or "It was raining." It's something that's very, very useful. But it's something that a French I student just could not handle, even though the frequency that you use that is very, very great. I believe that you should be learning things in the frequency with which you use them, but there are some things you just can't handle. The difference between the *imparfait* and the *passé composé* is one of those. So they've learned, in French II, the *passé composé* and the *imparfait*, so now it's a question of getting to use them, to feel comfortable in using them together. (Curric 3:5)

Susan still employed a textbook at this level, the third book in the Valette series, French for Fluency, which continued the emphasis on grammar.

But I still don't believe that the students have all the grammar they need after Level II. I think that was a mistake when I first started teaching, that after Level II, I figured, They have enough grammar. We're going to have fun. We're just going to read and play games. No, they needed the conditional. They needed so much more, the subjunctive--I don't think I



even thought of teaching that. I didn't like the sound of it either, but it's really not that hard, once you get over the fear of teaching it, then you can go on, and then have fun. I still think in Level III a structured program is great. (Curric 2:13)

At Level III, the first of the "advanced levels," the content became less prescribed and more a function of other factors:

There is no one syllabus. It sort of depends on the interests of the teacher, the feeling of the group, and sometimes what's happening. (Curric 2:14)

Another key factor contributing to the variable content was the fact that the students were different:

It would be easier for me if the curriculum were fixed, and if every year, we did the same thing, but that is not the case. Every year, the students are different. Their interests are different. Their aptitudes are different. And I make modifications. I would not teach what I'm teaching to French III to other classes I've had in the past, not all of the classes, but to some of the other classes I've had. The students would find it too difficult. (Curric 2:17)

Aptitude and interests changed with the students, and so did Susan's definition of content for them.

| *Level III is pretty good. (Epilogue: 5/8/96)*

#### Level IV:

- France and Spain
- more movies
- history
- the past tenses
- project on foreign country

- more sophisticated readings
- excerpts from literature

- no single syllabus
- interests of teacher
- feeling of group
- what's happening

- see a play
- field trip

...at Level IV, I know I really try to concentrate on France and Spain. At that point, I feel they're really ready to get into some of the more interesting aspects of those cultures. So we see more movies from those countries. . . . You can really get into some very interesting aspects of history, because they can talk about it. They can use some of the past tenses to talk about what happened. We do projects that are a bit more sophisticated, I guess.

... they read things that are a little bit more sophisticated. In Spanish Four, they're read *Don Quixote*--not the whole work, excerpts from it. We did a short story by a Spanish author of the twentieth century. It's about a train ride from Santander to Madrid, and what happens on the train, sort of a slice of life type, and they'll get Spanish culture. We're doing that now. I guess the trick is to find works that aren't beyond the students, but yet hold their interest, and teach them, and that they relate to. The same thing in French: Jane now is doing *Antigone*. But there are a lot of possibilities. We have lots and lots of materials to choose from. There is no one syllabus. It sort of depends on the interests of the teacher, the feeling of the group, and sometimes what's happening. If there's going to be a play in Boston, if students are going to be seeing *Les Misérables*, we have *Les Chandeliers de l'Évêque*. . . . We have things that they can read if they're going to see a play by Molière, we have--quite a few, actually--we have *Le Malade Imaginaire*. We have *L'Avare*. I have a book on Molière, so we can copy anything. We have a lot of materials, and I think you always have to be flexible.

... we receive brochures in the summer, at the beginning of school, that certain things are happening throughout the year. There are little troupes who come traveling through the state, and we get their programs in the fall. It's possible to plan a field trip months ahead, so that you know that you can read a certain literary work to prepare students for the trip. (Curric 2:14)





In addition to the grammar, projects constituted an important content area in which students did research on various aspects of the cultures and countries where the language is spoken. Reading, specifically works of literature, occupy an important content area, as well. Above all, however, is an overriding emphasis on using the language, consistent with Susan's view of language learning as "performing what you know."

*Level IV could include some grammar things: review of grammar, review of the tenses. It could include all the past subjunctive, the passé simple in French. It could include more sophisticated points and distinctions, like the prepositions after various verbs--penser à, penser de--all those little distinctions that really show that you're an advanced language learner. (Epilogue: 5/8/96)*

### **Binders**

With Will's support, Susan undertook the task of codifying content and activities for each level for both French and Spanish, resulting in "three-inch binders"--curriculum guides, in effect. The binders included photocopied pages from published materials, typed or handwritten activity descriptions, references to the textbook and the workbooks, and other related materials. These pages were designed primarily for teacher reference, although there were also pages that could be photocopied and distributed to students. In fact, students had three-ring binders of their own, and they were expected to put homework assignments, worksheets, and other handouts they received in the binder, along with their class notes.

Material in the binders was divided into four quarters and organized in certain categories. In the case of the French III binder, the categories were the following:

- Grammar
- Project
- Literature
- Film
- Songs
- Conversations
- Games
- Pronunciation
- CBAT (College Board Achievement Test)

These categories comprised both content areas and learning activities. However, in terms of content, they consisted of the following:

<b>Grammar</b>	The grammar points were listed as chapters from the textbook <u>French for Fluency</u> , as well as from the <u>French in Action</u> text and materials, which also included video tapes. The grammar involved oral practice, written exercises, and other application exercises, like structured conversations.
<b>Project</b>	Project topics differed for each quarter, but they all related to some aspect of Francophone culture or countries. For the first quarter, the topic was <i>Le Monde Francophone</i> , where students researched and reported on a Francophone country of their choice. For the second quarter, the topic was French artists. These projects were structured so that the politics, history, and geography of a particular country were part of the research, the written paper, and the oral presentation.



<b>Literature</b>	For this quarter the selection was a play, a simplified version of <i>L'Avare</i> by Molière, a classic satire about a miserly man and his misadventures. Students read it in sections, writing summaries, answering comprehension questions, and discussing it in class. The play was about parent-child relations and love, topics of interest to students of this age. The language in the text led to explorations of grammar topics, such as the subjunctive.
<b>Film</b>	One movie was scheduled per quarter. In general, movies provided additional information about the language and the culture. Seeing a movie "gives the language life. It shows people using a language, in lots of different situations. Movies are enjoyable. They're a change of pace, visually stimulating. They show the culture of the people" (Curric 3:11). The movie for this quarter, <i>L'Argent de Poche</i> , had a "tie-in" with <i>L'Avare</i> , in that one scene in the movie shows a student reciting a scene from the play.
<b>Song</b>	The song also has a "linguistic tie-in" in that the lyrics illustrate a particular feature of the grammar or vocabulary. Like movies, they are "a change of pace" and are intended to be "fun," especially if students can be encouraged to sing them.
<b>Conversations</b>	This consisted of a list of topics for conversation, basically descriptions of a situation, which the students have to enact through using the language. For the most part, these topics were taken from the <u>French in Action</u> materials.
<b>Games</b>	These included published games like Monopoly and Mille Bornes, or other games like poker, where the intention was "just for speaking, basically for speaking the language, trying to keep it in the foreign language" (Curric 3:15). Handouts accompanied the games to give students guidance.
<b>Pronunciation</b>	This represented an ongoing emphasis, "that. . . is worked in all the time, every day" (Curric 3:16), primarily through correction. There was also a handout with basic pronunciation rules for French.
<b>Exam practice</b>	This area was included because of the previous year, when a number of students took the College Board Achievement Tests (CBAT) in French in order to qualify for intermediate-level courses in college. There was a computer program that replicated test questions. To this point in the course, students had yet to express an interest in taking the exam. No work had been done on this area.

To summarize, Susan organized the content into categories that reflected both content and learning activities. The content was derived from multiple sources: the textbook *French for Fluency*, the video tapes and written materials of *French in Action*, the drama *L'Avare* by Molière written in "easy French," and from students' research and presentation of projects on cultural topics. Other sources which supported these primary content areas, through "linguistic tie-ins," were movies, songs, games, and pronunciation practice.

While the actual content did vary according to students' interests and abilities--and the teacher's interests, the categories, or content emphases, remained. Given these emphases, the question arose as to how they were organized and sequenced within a quarter. Susan spelled out how she did this:





What I do very often, my own system, my own personal system--such as this. This is what I'd like to cover this quarter. Then I will take a pencil--I'll have several copies of this [list of categories]--and I'll take my rough draft copy, and I will put one, two, three, four, five by them.

PM: A sequence?

Yes. I'll try to stick to that, but a lot of the order in which I do things depends on the class itself, how it's reacting to what we're doing. If we're in the middle of *L'Avare*, and I see we need a change--a song, I'll move it around. If their energy is low, and I feel like, Oh let's play a game, I'll do that. I will make changes.

So, how will that affect the beginning order? I guess I would...because it's easy to put off grammar--I don't dislike grammar. I like grammar. But because it's more intense, it's perhaps more demanding than some of the other categories, I would probably start with that, so that we can get a good firm start on that. Then...where did we go this quarter? We started with *French in Action*, with the TV. We saw the TV, which was, I think, high interest. Then we worked on some of the grammar, the things I showed you. The project was introduced fairly soon. They worked on that, at the beginning, and then they would work on that while they were doing *grammaire*. We did a song toward the beginning--that might be three. I guess that was probably three. The conversations were part of the grammar. Then we began, after two units of *grammaire*, we did *L'Avare*, started that. That has been interspersed with presenting their projects. (Curric 3:16)

This gives an example of the flexibility of the content emphases, and how Susan moved them around. As is apparent, the grammar occupied a central position. When asked about how all these emphases fit together, Susan outlined their relationship as part of the overall emphasis of "students' ability to function in the language":

They all overlap in a learning experience. I feel the students' ability to function in the language is a vertical progression, but yet at the same time we're expanding horizontally, we're kind of moving up. Stepping stones going up. A project on art might be considered quote ambitious, lofty, but it's not, because they're doing it at their level. Everything they do adds to their ability to function in the language. They're constantly moving up. Every day they learn something new. It could be something in art. It could be something in *le subjonctif*. It could be something else, but they're moving up little by little. I think it's kind of just like a spiral progression, a spiral ascension. They're constantly learning new things, adding to their repertoire. They're becoming more able to function.

I think it's just a nice variety of things that they're doing. They're doing a lot of nice things. As we're going up, if I see that they need things to go up that progression, I can put it in. The subjunctive was something I felt they needed. It was not in my overall plan. I wasn't planning to do it at the beginning of the year, but as we were reading *L'Avare*, it was obvious that they needed that. I mentioned the passage that had so many instances of using it that they needed it. It's perhaps slowed us down a little bit in reading the play, but I don't see that as anything terrible. I still feel they're getting some good reading in. (Obs 1:14)

In her account, she described not only content, but outcomes and activities, as well. Functioning in the language was a "vertical progression," and as students moved up in a "spiral ascension," they were learning new things that allowed them to "expand horizontally," like learning new vocabulary. The diagram illustrates:



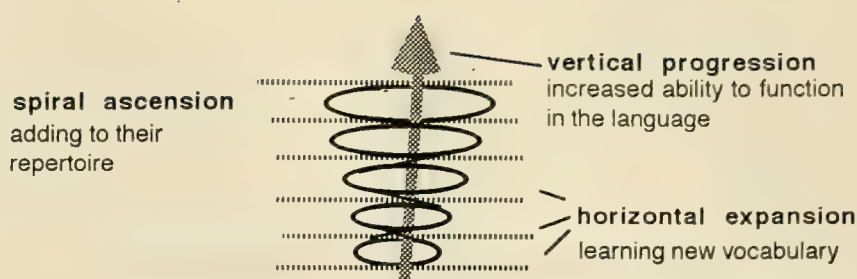


Figure 6: Spiral Ascension I

The content emphases all fit into this conception: horizontal, vertical, and spiral ascension. At the core of the vertical dimension was grammar, more specifically, verb tenses:

Well, the verbs come to mind. They're just so obvious. It just seems like every type of language teacher--maybe I'm wrong--but every time we sit down and we talk about proficiency goals, what they need to know at each level, verbs are such an important part.

PM: When you say verbs...

Susan: Verb tenses. Verb tenses is part of it, but I mean you can talk about stem-changing verbs, irregular verbs, and put those on the scale, too. For sure. To me, I guess I would have to agree with that right now, unless someone gave me a different idea, with some other idea that maybe that were not correct. It does seem to me like you can move up levels if you know verbs. You can do more. (Obs 1:15)

When talking about verb tenses, however, other aspects of this content dimension entered the picture:

What we're talking about now is pretty complex, because when you say that you can talk about what verb tenses, you could ask, How can the student function? Can they write them? Can they speak? Are they able to manipulate them, and use them in various contexts? There is a lot. I guess I don't really have it that well defined in my mind in order to say what determines exactly what level. I'm sure there are different levels. You could be at one level written and another level spoken. (Obs 1:15)

The ability to "function" in the verb tense involved manipulating them and using them in various contexts, whether in speaking or in writing. To Susan's way of thinking, this involved the four skills:

I like to think that when you're learning the skills, the four skills, you're learning them all together, that they are interwoven and that you're being taught, and you're learning in such a way that all four skills are emphasized. You have writing to do, speaking to do, you're doing listening, you're doing reading. That's why perhaps when I do my syllabus, I try to include all different kinds of activities. The projects: there's writing, there's listening. There are *dictées*. There are readings.

As you move up that vertical chart--based on verbs, verb tenses, right now is where I would begin--I think as you go up that chart, all four skills are improving. Reading: you can start off reading little things, little paragraphs. Writing: you could do dialogue journals at all four levels. Listening: your listening skills have to move up slowly. (Obs 1:16)

Returning to the diagram, the vertical dimension was expanded to include the four skills, as manifestations of the grammar core, verb tenses. Without the spiral, the vertical and horizontal dimensions look like this:





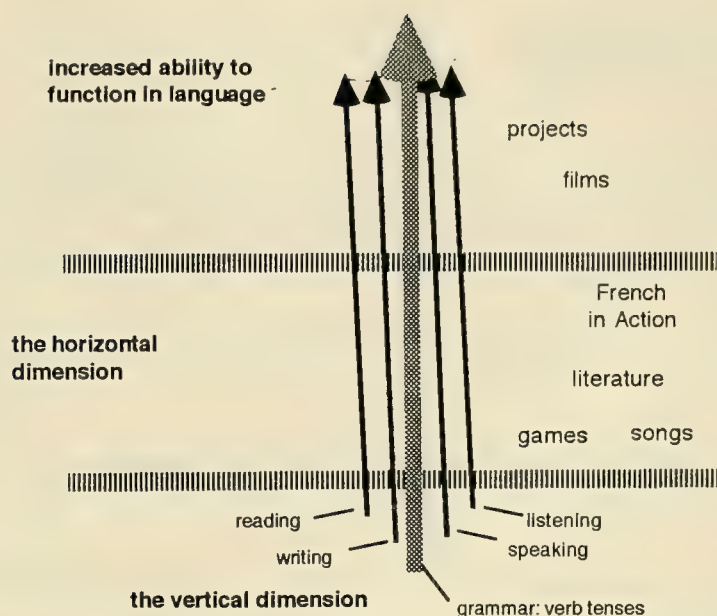


Figure 7: Vertical and Horizontal Dimensions

Students' movement up the vertical dimension, in Susan's conception, was like a "spiral ascension," as she put it. "They're becoming more able to function" (Obs 1:14). The spiral image captured her view of how content "fed" language learning:

Well, I have my way of teaching. Everybody has their own way. As you go up on this spiral...the spiral image is nice, because it kind of implies that language learning can be fed, like a fire, with all kinds of things. There's no one right thing. You can be putting in little short stories. You can be putting in newspapers. You can be putting in a little trip to Canada. You can be putting in everything. It's just something that you build as you go up. Your ability builds as you go up the spiral. (Obs 1:16)

The spiral thus integrated both the horizontal and vertical dimensions of content, in a dynamic way: "Tying them together, feeding on each other, propelling motion upward" (Obs 1:15). To put all these elements together in the illustration:



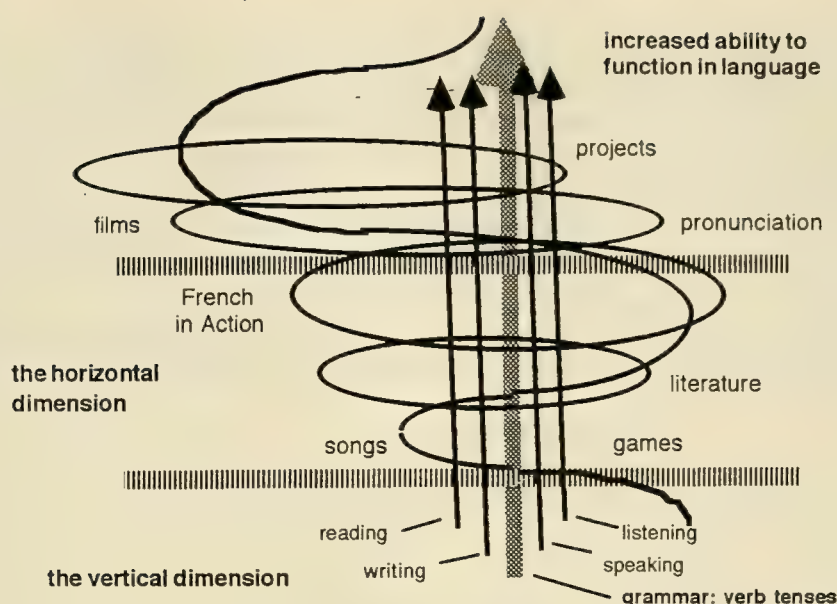


Figure 8: Spiral Ascension II

When Susan described how one of her French students, Karine, "advances a little bit on her spiral" by talking about her project, it was about the student integrating all that she knew at that moment:

If Pierre talks to me about his project, and Karine talks to me about hers, what he says to me--because he's bilingual--might be much more advanced and sophisticated than what she says, but what she's saying is also helping her advance a little bit on her spiral. By doing it, she's learning a little bit more. By talking to me, she's using, she's being forced to pull out what she knows, what she's learned in French I, in French II, the verbs *être*, *avoir*, using the *imparfait*.

That's another thing about language learning, you're forced to perform what you've learned. You have to show that you've been paying attention for the last two years, that you remember *de* after negatives. It's just all tied together. What she's telling me about her art project is what she's capable of saying after her two years in French class.  
(Obs 1:17)

To summarize at this juncture, Susan's conception of content was grounded in a view of language learning as performing what was learned, which she called "functioning in the language." She saw the ability "to function correctly in the language" (Obs 2:11) as a vertical progression, where the central content areas were grammar, especially verb tenses, and the four skill areas: reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Vocabulary development and cultural information were on a horizontal dimension. Students increased their ability to function in the language by moving up in a "spiral ascension," in which their work in a variety of content areas and learning activities gave them opportunities to use the language.

The curriculum reflected this concept. Grammar is at the core and is presented primarily through the textbook series from D.C. Heath: French for Mastery and in Level III, French for Fluency, supplemented by French in Action, a video-based set of materials. Additional content and activity areas were conversations, projects, literature, film, songs, games, and pronunciation.





## Outcomes

Susan's conceptions of outcomes were closely linked with her conceptions of content and roles. Language learning was performing what you know, moving up vertically toward greater ability to function correctly in the language in a spiral ascension, adding vocabulary and cultural information through horizontal expansion. In the facilitator role, Susan provided students with opportunities to perform through activities involving reading, writing, speaking, and listening, where the emphasis was on both fun and hard work.

Susan had a number of intended outcomes for students in the language program in general, and for French students in particular, illustrated in the following diagram:



Figure 9: Outcomes

These six conceptions of outcomes are described in detail in the following pages.

### Performing in French

functioning  
using  
creating

expressing themselves  
communicating

doing writing, speaking,  
listening, reading

abilities

comfortable using the  
language

work

- "What I really want to know is: Can the students function? Can they use it? Can they actually create?" (Obs 1:8)
- "It's much more better that they express themselves and communicate." (Obs 1:19)
- "You have writing to do, speaking to do, you're doing listening, you're doing reading." (Obs 1:16)
- "That's important--to be able to have experiences in the foreign language, to be able to ask for something, to be able to get on the bus, or to not feel completely lost if people don't understand. (Curric 1:15)
- "I hope that they learn enough of the foreign language so that they feel they are not intimidated by the foreign culture so that they can go there and feel comfortable using the language . . . (Curric 1:15)
- "Learning is work, too. Especially a foreign language. It's not something you're going to pick up immediately. You're constantly being called on to perform what you know." (Bio 3:14)



Performing in the language was a matter of "doing" in a variety of ways, all involving students actively using the language in some way. Susan did not seek any uniform level of performance from students, but rather that they perform to their capacity, which she recognized as a function of students' abilities, and therefore, variable. There was no single standard of performance that all students were to attain. Of more importance to her was that students "feel comfortable using the language" and with what they did know.

Performing was also connected to the "work" of learning a foreign language; therefore, an outcome in this area was a "work ethic"(Bio 3:16), as she referred to it.

### Knowing about Francophone countries

culture  
political life  
geography  
food  
history

politically sensitive

- "I hope that they know a lot more about the culture, a little bit about the political life, a little bit about the geography, a little bit about the food, a little bit about where the countries are that the languages...that they're studying--where they speak, in what parts of the world, a little bit about the whole politics of the situation--that of course, involves the colonial effort--if the French were in Haiti, if the French were in various countries. What happened to that country? Why is it the way it is today? Why do people have the political systems they have today? Where does the language stand right now, as far as that country goes? Do they use it? In Canada, it's a very big question, the whole French language question. Just make them a little politically sensitive." (Curric 1:15)

Susan characterized this conception as "knowing a little bit" about a number of content areas that fell under the category of French-speaking countries. The emphasis in this conception did appear to be on general information, with the most consistent themes being politics, history, and geography.





## Developing the right attitudes

confidence	- "Confident in what they know--not that they're fluent--but confident that they do know something, that they've accomplished something in language in the years they've studied.
positive view of language	And to sort of give them the idea that there is more, but in a positive sense, that some day they can either go back to it, if they're going to abandon it, or continue studying it at college, and wouldn't that be nice, to be able to be fluent in another language." (Curric 1:15)
openness to further study	
motivation to learn	- "... because if you've got the right attitude, if you like it, you're going to learn faster, and pay attention. Maybe just those few minutes the teacher spends telling a joke, or laughing at themselves, or something funny in class--probably those little moments are very, very important in determining the students' attitude and desire to learn the foreign language." (Bio 3:14)
desire to do well	- "I think my students are getting the right attitude, that they want to speak better. They do want to have a good accent, that it is important." (Bio 2:16)
effort and participation	- "As long as they're all participating, they've got a good attitude, and they're trying, I think that's working out real well. (Obs 1:4)
serious work	- "I think learning should be fun, but at the same time, it has to be taken seriously. It's work. Learning is work, too. Especially a foreign language. It's not something you're going to pick up immediately." (Bio 3:13)
humility	- "I try to instill in them sort of a little bit of a sense of humility, that if they're speaking the language and somebody answers back in English, it's not the end of the world. But if they can approach the situation from the point of view that, 'I'm learning the language. Would you be willing to talk to me? Let's have a conversation.' That that's so much better. Because, as a language teacher, I've heard so many people say, 'I hate the language. Or, I tried to speak it and they answered me in English, and that was the end.' It shouldn't be the end. The whole situation should be approached from the right angle, or it just won't work. (Curric 1:16)
perception of oneself as a learner	
comfort	- "I hope that they learn enough of the foreign language so that they feel they are not intimidated by the foreign culture so that they can go there and feel comfortable using the language, but also realize that they're not going to understand everything, that it's a lifelong process of learning." (Curric 1:15)
acceptance of language learning as lifelong process	

This conception captured a number of outcomes that Susan held for students. They involved attitudes toward the subject matter itself, namely a positive attitude toward the language, as well as a motivation for studying it and for doing well. They also included general attitudes toward learning, such as effort and participation, and specific attitudes toward language learning as work, and the perception of oneself as a learner engaged in a lifelong process of learning, and from this perception, acceptance of one's knowledge and ability.



## Enjoying the language

- |                                     |   |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| self- sustained enjoyment           | - "That's <u>one</u> of the goals of teaching is to get your students so that they can enjoy the language, on their own." (Bio 2:18)  |
| enjoying speaking                   | - "I believe in working more on being able to use the language for conversation, getting what you need, getting your needs met when you're traveling, and enjoying speaking the language. (Curric 1:6)  |
| enjoying reading                    | - " <u>L'Avare</u> de Molière. We're reading that now. I guess, deep inside, I don't like to keep pulling grammar things out of a unit. I'm reading <u>L'Avare</u> for the fun and the enjoyment and using the language. (Curric 3:3)                               |
| enjoying watching and understanding | - "For Karine, my hope for her was that she was catching words now and then, that she was understanding overall what was happening, and enjoying it. I'd hate to have them watch something that they just didn't like. I felt like that was kind of fun." (Obs 1:2) |
| enjoying performing                 | - "Then, to give them time to do their little skit. They enjoy that." (Obs 2:4)   |

While enjoying the language could be seen as a "right attitude" of sorts, Susan referred to students "enjoying" frequently enough in other contexts to suggest a distinct outcome in her teaching. However, enjoyment was not an end in itself, but a companion to the serious work of language learning, an instance of what she called "a work ethic, but at the same time, we can have fun while we're doing it" (Bio 3:15). Thus, enjoyment was a constant intended outcome linked to performing in the language.

## Going beyond

- |                                    |  |
|------------------------------------|--|
| a higher level<br>challenging      | - "I think we can have fun with the language in class, and teach them, and get them to be proficient, but when you take them beyond, up to that higher level, that they're into experiencing something that's really neat, that's being challenged. It could be their views on, you know, Nazi occupation of France, or anything like that, it just...It stays with them, and it's a learning experience. I guess...I felt that, and I'd like my students to feel that, too. |
| a lasting impact                   | ... [beyond] just everyday functioning. Lifting you up. I don't know, making...expanding your mind, making you think. Or learning. Just learning more about mankind. (Bio 1:20)  |
| uplifting<br>inspiring             | - "But I can't say I got to the point where...Oh, this is funny! I love it! This is so good! If I could get students to that point, where they say, 'Molière is really great! He's really great.' Not because I made them say that, or I said he's great, but because they discovered it by reading it. That would be wonderful." (Obs 3:6)  |
| literary appreciation              | - "... that's probably one of the reasons why I give them the project on art, because I find it personally very interesting, and I'm hoping that they will also develop their interest in art. (Obs 2:4)   |
| interest in art                    | - "We're at the point, when we're doing this [art project]--even at the level of beginning, or even a second year student can use the language for communication about real things, about things that are not just the language. We're talking content." (Obs 2:8)   |
| communication about<br>real things |  |





In this conception, the language was a vehicle for "communication about real things," matters that go beyond "just-functioning in the language." For Susan, achieving this outcome did not depend on advanced ability in the language, and can occur for second year students. This outcome was directly connected to the "knowing about" outcome.

### Preparing for college-level French

success in college	- "I think students have shown that they can come out of the program and get into college intermediate courses, and have success, and do pretty well." (Curric 2:15)
college-type tests	- "But these students, if they're going to go anywhere with languages after...they're going to a college, they're going to have to take placement tests, maybe the achievement test. The tests are so difficult, they need to be exposed to this kind of test--in fact, more than what I do--something I know they need. If we're going to prepare students for languages in college, they really do need an awful lot of grammar. I'm not sure how to give it to them. It's no fun. It's not fun just spending a lot of time just going over verbs." (Obs 3:15)
need for grammar	
program standards	- "I wouldn't want to water the program down so that those students who want to go to college and who want to at least get into an intermediate course in college would feel like they couldn't get in, or would find that they didn't get in, because they hadn't learned enough." (Curric 2:6)

This outcome related to the overall function of the language program in the school: to prepare students for college. The need for grammar, especially accuracy, was an important outcome. Susan was very conscious of how college French professors evaluated students' abilities:

I've seen it happen, that they get to college, and then they seem to regress. They forget the little things, like the partitive *de* after a negative. These things look terrible at college. Colleges look at it and say, "Oh they don't learn anything. They don't learn the basic grammar." (Curric 2:14)

Not surprisingly, Susan's system for grading students' work also reflected these outcomes. Her grading system for each quarter was based on five areas: quizzes, homework, the mid-term examination, students' projects, and a participation grade. Each of these counted one-fifth of a student's final grade.



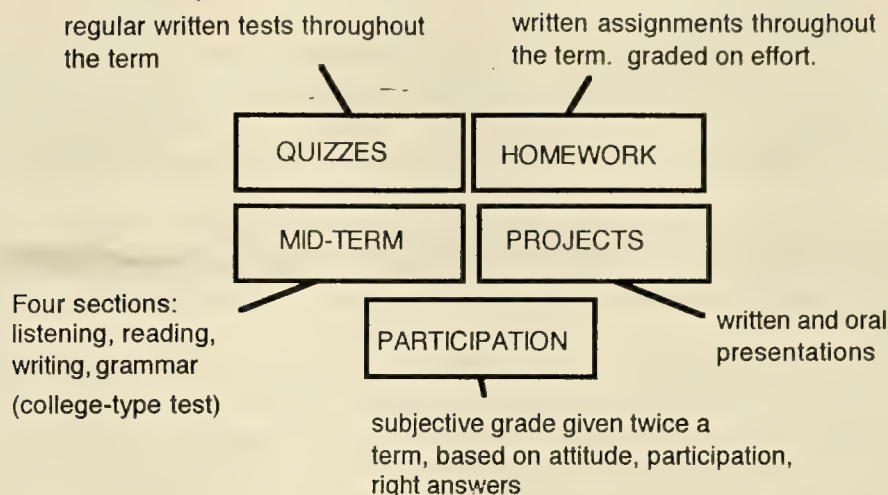


Figure 10: Grades

Students did have to produce results, but their effort and participation also counted substantially. For homework grades, Susan made allowances for differing students' abilities and aptitudes in the language:

I have a hard time grading homework, because I feel this is their attempt to learn the material. They're not experts. Some have a lot more ability than others. What's more important to me is that they all make an effort, not that they do it perfectly, because that really wouldn't be fair to those who have to work harder in order to know the material. What I want to see is an effort from each student. (Obs 3:13)

Participation was somewhat different, and involved students' attitudes toward language study. Susan was looking at performance, but with an eye toward students' movement and progress.

I try to get them moving in some direction. I say, "He's done better. He's done worse." I don't try to leave them in one place. I find that it's not good, because then you're just kind of classifying somebody. I try to constantly look at them and say, "Now are they getting better? Are they participating more?" It makes me more aware of their participation. It makes me look at them to see: what are they doing? (Obs 3:14)

Of course, these outcomes overlapped in practice. Susan described her intentions in working with literature, and it is interesting to note how many outcomes converged in her description:

But if you can bring them to the point where they'll pick up something and want to read it, it's pretty exciting. To think that you've brought them to the point where they can read a page and laugh while they're reading, that's amazing. I think perhaps that, as much as having a conversation in the foreign language, gives them the sense that, "Wow I'm functional." And it makes them want to continue. (Curric 3:9)

In a sense, everything came together here. Functioning in the language through reading was just as powerful as doing so through conversation. It could spark students' appreciation of the literary work, and presumably, knowledge about the culture. Moreover, it fueled students' motivation, enjoyment of the language, and the desire to continue. And of course, literature was college-type material.

## Activities

Susan's conception of activities was closely intertwined with her conceptions of content, outcomes, and of roles. As we have seen, the categories in the





curriculum guide binders comprised both content areas and activities, like games, conversations, and projects. Likewise, Susan's conception of performing as an outcome exerted a strong influence on activities and on the roles she chose to play. Also, Susan's image of the spiral ascension through vertical and horizontal dimensions portrayed her view of activities as much as content and outcomes.

In describing Susan's conception of activities, we begin with a brief description of a week of activities in her French II/III class, then move to her description of the organization these activities, and on to a summary of features of her activities.

To illustrate the range of activities Susan uses, I have summarized her account of a week's work of activities with her French II/III combination class, from Monday through Friday. This combination class was organized so that the French III students, Pierre and Monique, did independent work on Monday, and did not attend class on Wednesday, when they were in chemistry class. The French III student, Karine, worked with Susan on Monday and Wednesday, and did independent work on Tuesday and Thursday. On Friday, both groups worked together with Susan. This class met in two parts, before and after lunch, in different rooms.

To set the stage, the French III students had been working on the play *L'Avare*, having read up to Act III. From the text, Susan had drawn out the subjunctive and had the students do some concentrated work on it from the textbook, which they began on Monday. Students had also been doing some work with the French in Action tapes and accompanying materials.

The sequence of activities for the French II and III students went like this:

### **Monday**

Pierre and Monique worked independently on written exercises from French for Fluency textbook and workbook.

Susan worked with Karine on the *passé composé* tense.

### **Tuesday**

For part one of class, Susan and the French III students "went over their worksheets" on the subjunctive. After lunch, they played a game with index cards and a peg board. Students completed the sentences on cards, using the right form of the subjunctive, and advanced pegs on the board according to the number of points assigned to the card.

Karine worked independently on the *passé composé*, doing exercises in the French for Mastery II book.

### **Wednesday**

The French III students were in chemistry class.

Susan worked with Karine, going over the *passé composé*, this time describing a picture on the blackboard, and eliciting from Karine the various patterns for question formation: yes-no, information questions, and inversion. Susan then told her a story in the past and asked her questions about it.



### Thursday

In part one, Pierre and Monique took a written quiz on the subjunctive, consisting of photocopied sections from the textbook and workbook that Susan had shortened. Another part of the quiz was a question about students' home lives that Susan wrote on the blackboard. She wanted to know what their parents asked, suggested, or recommended they do, which required that students use the subjunctive in their answers.

In part two, they began work on their projects, presentations on a French artist. Susan asked them to write down some information about the artist they'd chosen. Students handed this in and then began independent research. Pierre went to the library to do a computer search, while Monique looked through an art book that Susan had brought to class. She found a reproduction of the Red Room by Matisse, the artist she had chosen, and told Susan about it.

Karine worked independently on preparation of questions in the *passé composé*, based on the exercises she had done previously in the week.

### Friday

Both French II and French III worked together. In part one, students read through a brief summary of the video tape lesson from French in Action that they were about to see, the first section of a handout Susan had distributed. They answered questions that Susan had prepared for each of them, based on their level of ability. Susan explained some vocabulary words and expressions from the lesson. Students then watched the video, which Susan stopped a few times to ask them questions about what they had seen and understood. Following the video, Susan asked students what they were going to have for lunch.

After lunch, in part two, Susan reviewed the second section of the handout, vocabulary items, and asked students for definitions. Then, students watched another video excerpt from French in Action, and answered questions about it when Susan stopped it at intervals. Susan then asked students to choose one role play from the options offered on the third section of the handout, all of them drawn from the interactions of the video excerpts. They went to the back of the room to rehearse (in French and English) and then enact it in French, an encounter between a child and a couple. Afterwards, Susan praised their work, pointed out a few errors, and announced that they would all get a credit for it.

Class ended with Susan's distribution of photocopied French francs, *billets*, which students earn for doing homework and other tasks, including correcting the teacher's errors in French. At the end of the week, they could buy things such as pencils or other small objects from a box that Susan brought in, including a homework pass.

This brief sketch of the week's learning activities gives an indication of learning activities and the connections to content and outcomes. As is evident for the French III, Susan had a number of things in motion: work on the subjunctive, reading the play, French in Action, and the project on French artists. There was an emphasis on performing in the language, through reading, writing, listening, and speaking. There were activities that asked students to connect the language forms to their lives, activities for playing with the language and enjoyment. And there were practice exercises and quizzes--the serious work of language learning, taken directly from French for Mastery II and French for Fluency.





Although many activities and content emphases were in play, Susan saw them all as very connected, and ultimately as central to learning, because of "reinforcement."

I think there are so many other things. We do have a lot of material. We do have so many things to reach for. We do have so many games, so many *le trucs*. You can do the journals. You can do so much. I really don't want to be tied to a video. But...it's wonderful. It's really wonderful. A lot of the things that you do--when you came in and we said, *Je vous présente, je te présente*, and then later on in the film they used *présenter*--so much is tied together. It's just amazing.

They can be reading so many different things. They can be reading *L'Avare*, then do grammar, and then see the video, and so much of it is all inclusive. It's just reinforcement, hearing the same thing again, but in a different context. I guess I feel that. I'm very, very certain that re-entry, by force of hearing the same thing over and over, you learn it. That's really the best way. (Obs 1:3)

The variety of activities served to reinforce "the same thing again, but in a different context."

This notion of reinforcement was a central feature of Susan's spiral image, as described in the section on content. This image organized these varied activities:

They all overlap in a learning experience. I feel the students' ability to function in the language is a vertical progression, but yet at the same time we're expanding horizontally, we're kind of moving up. Stepping stones going up. A project on art might be considered quite ambitious, lofty, but it's not, because they're doing it at their level. Everything they do adds to their ability to function in the language. They're constantly moving up.

Every day they learn something new. It could be something in art. It could be something in *le subjonctif*. It could be something else, but they're moving up little by little. I think it's kind of just like a spiral progression, a spiral ascension. They're constantly learning new things, adding to their repertoire. They're becoming more able to function.

I think it's just a nice variety of things that they're doing. They're doing a lot of nice things. As we're going up, if I see that they need things to go up that progression, I can put it in. The subjunctive was something I felt they needed. It was not in my overall plan. I wasn't planning to do it at the beginning of the year, but as we were reading *L'Avare*, it was obvious that they needed that. I mentioned the passage that had so many instances of using it that they needed it. It's perhaps slowed us down a little bit in reading the play, but I don't see that as anything terrible. I still feel they're getting some good reading in. (Obs 1:14)

This image held content, activities, and outcomes together for Susan.

Looking back at Karine, the French II student, Susan described how this conception applied to Karine's work on the past tense in French:

Well, I guess we talked about how proud they were when they would learn a new verb tense. It was like all of a sudden, they were able to function more fully, on a higher level. I've heard them brag, "Oh well now we've learned this in our class. We've learned that." After teaching the *passé composé* to Karine in French II, a whole world has opened to her. She has gone from the present--and I would put it vertically--up a level to the *passé composé*. Now she can talk about what she did yesterday, last week, two years ago, and she can read a whole range of things that are written for students in French who know the *présent* and the *passé composé*. (Obs 1:13)

The past tense opened up "a whole world" to Karine, giving her a new range of self-expression and opportunities in French.



As a result, Karine now had additional language that was within her reach, doable, because she had ability in a new verb tense.

... it's all horizontal expansion, because she can function now on that level. If she has to learn a new vocabulary, I think she's got the skills to learn it without running into a stone wall. Whereas if she were suddenly reading something and she had to read the future and the conditional and the *imparfait*, she would give up: "I can't do that." But with the vocabulary, she can pretty much handle that. (Obs 1:14)

Moving up vertically and expanding horizontally was related to the nature of the activities as much as it was to the variety of content emphases. In Susan's view, this involved the four skills:

I like to think that when you're learning the skills, the four skills, you're learning them all together, that they are interwoven and that you're being taught, and you're learning in such a way that all four skills are emphasized. You have writing to do, speaking to do, you're doing listening, you're doing reading. That's why perhaps when I do my syllabus, I try to include all different kinds of activities. The projects: there's writing, there's listening. There are *dictées*. There are readings.

As you move up that vertical chart--based on verbs, verb tenses, right now is where I would begin--I think as you go up that chart, all four skills are improving. Reading: you can start off reading little things, little paragraphs. Writing: you could do dialogue journals at all four levels. Listening: your listening skills have to move up slowly. (Obs 1:16)

Susan related this image to Karine and Pierre:

If you look at Karine now in Level II as she listens to French in Action, she is at least one level, if you talk about year-level like you talk in high school, she is at least one level, maybe more--definitely more, I would say, than Pierre. I think Pierre is a very strong III-IV student, and she is II, beginning II. So they're quite a ways apart. I think pretty much his speaking obviously, because he's bilingual, is higher, but I think his writing, he's probably at a III-level. But they're moving up, and I think they're moving up with baggage of all four skills getting better at the same time. (Obs 1:16)

As long as there was the emphasis on the four skills and the verb tenses, the content forms could vary, as Susan saw it. The spiral ascension of increasing ability to function in the language was the primary arbiter of activities:

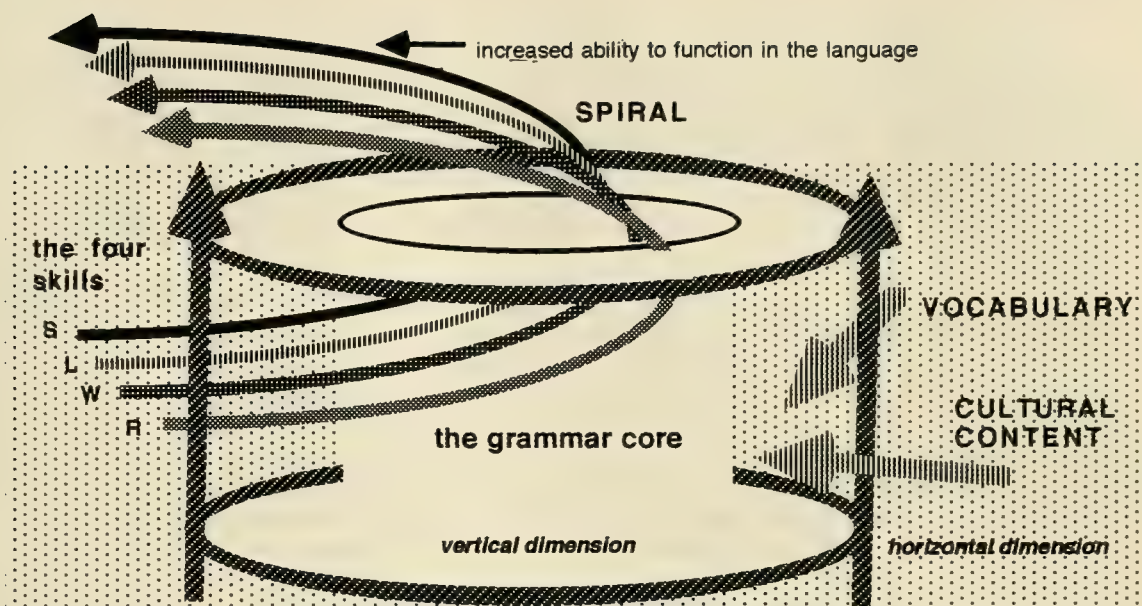
As you go up on this spiral...the spiral image is nice, because it kind of implies that language learning can be fed, like a fire, with all kinds of things. There's no one right thing. You can be putting in little short stories. You can be putting in newspapers. You can be putting in a little trip to Canada. You can be putting in everything. It's just something that you build as you go up. Your ability builds as you go up the spiral. (Obs 1:17)

In other words, as long as the activity featured students' functioning in the language, the actual content emphasis was of secondary importance. It could almost be "anything."

Therefore, as the following modified diagram of the spiral ascension illustrates, Susan's conception of activities required that they embody modes of reading, writing, listening and speaking which emphasize students functioning, performing, in the language. Students ascended vertically, increasing their ability to function in the language by their work in grammar and verb tenses, and by expanding their vocabulary and cultural knowledge on a horizontal dimension through readings, projects, films, and other sources of content.

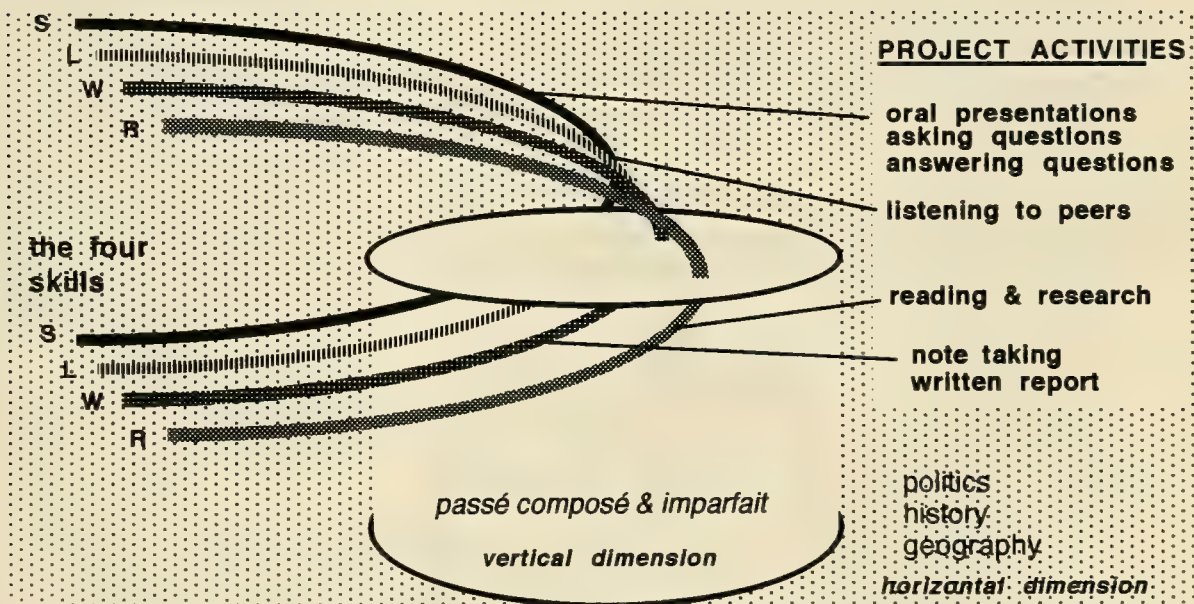






Performing, or doing reading, writing, listening, and speaking is at the heart of Susan's conception of activities.

In the case of the Art Project, for example, all of these areas were included in various stages. Students carried out a number of tasks that directly focused on these skills. The following diagram shows these activities in relationship to the spiral image.





Given this series of activities, Susan described how students moved up the spiral through their work on the projects:

What they did on their projects, for example, probably would, in my mind, move them a bit little higher on that spiral, because it's a spiral of being able to function correctly in the language. If they did their projects, the work they needed in order to express what they were trying to say, and they used the new words that they learned, along with the grammar that they had been studying--that they knew--so far, because this project required them to use the *passé composé*, the *imparfait*. I don't think they used the future at all. But all these things, in my mind, just moves them up a little bit more. (Obs 3:12)

### Activity Features

While the spiral explained the focus of activities, it did not explain the nature of the activities. Susan described the features she intended for activities:

I think it's a combination of interest, ability, and just being right at what they're capable of doing, but not being too challenging, too difficult, but being just a tiny bit ahead of them, so that they always have something to work for. Something to learn, but something that they can do. It's like there's a little engine ahead of us, a little locomotion, and if they're willing to stay with it, they're going to learn. They're going to have to work but they can do it. I think that's the thing: not make it too hard, but make it challenging. (Obs 1:17)

Activities needed to catch and hold students' interest, be challenging, yet within students' abilities--doable. In addition, Susan wanted her activities to be meaningful, and transparent, in the sense that students understood "where they're going." And, she wanted students to have a "good feeling" about the activities and their intended outcomes.

I think, underneath it all, inside of me, there's something that says that inside all of us, there's sort of a...it has to be cognitive type learning. It can't be rote. It has to be meaningful. But a little bit of that is good: a little rote, a little bit of Audiolingual is good. Basically, it has to be cognitive. People have to know where they're going. They have to have a good feeling about it. They have to be engaged in the method. There is no one method that I would say, "That's it." I wish there were. That would make it a lot easier. But I'm constantly trying things. I think learning should be fun, but at the same time, it has to be taken seriously. It's work. Learning is work, too. Especially a foreign language. It's not something you're going to pick up immediately. You're constantly being called on to perform what you know. I've heard that it's the most difficult subject. I don't know how many people agree with that, but it can be. I think it can be as difficult as one decides to put...as much effort as one decides to put into it. (Bio 3:13)

The overlap with Susan's conceptions of learning outcomes was apparent here, namely, the importance of students' developing the right attitudes and enjoying the language. Specifically, these attitudes were features of her choice and implementation of learning activities.

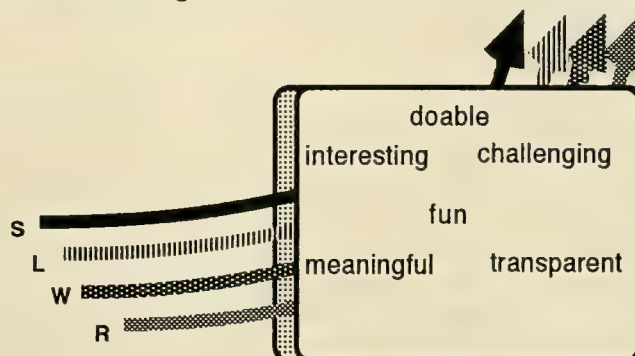


Figure 13: Learning Activities





While these features were manifest in Susan's classroom activities, they were also reflected in the activities associated with the Language Club. The Club activities involved expanding students' horizons beyond the school through the annual trip abroad, the Amnesty International chapter, the Peace Corps projects, the cultural activities and events, and the college scholarship fund.

To summarize, Susan's conception of activities was connected to her view of language learning as a spiral ascension. She employed a variety of activities that reflected her conceptions of outcomes: students' performing and enjoying the language in activities that were engaging, meaningful, challenging, doable, and enjoyable.

### **Context**

The circumstances in the high school exerted affected Susan's conceptions of French. As detailed earlier, Susan's mission of building the language program encountered both support and resistance from those in the school, both directly and indirectly.

On the one hand, Susan's efforts met with support and encouragement. She was able to add Spanish to the curriculum in 1980, and the principal informed her of the scholarship opportunity which led to her Master's degree and certification in Spanish, and wrote her a letter of support which helped her get the scholarship money. He even told her that he would like to see language teaching in the seventh and eighth grades. The principal also took the lead in establishing a part-time teaching position in French to support the expanded enrollment in French and Spanish that Susan had achieved with the help of Will, the student teacher. Other teachers in the school who were alone, like the art teacher and the home ec teacher, expressed their desire to have a part-time teacher in their departments, and they wondered how Susan managed to get one. After the school had received a satellite antenna from the local cable television provider, the principal arranged for the school to receive SCOLA, programming in foreign languages, as well as a television set. Susan took advantage of this source of content and used excerpts in her Spanish and French classes. The librarian was also a source of support, keeping foreign language books on the shelves for student use, as well as alerting Susan to grant money and helping her with proposals related to foreign language study. Susan also described other teachers in the school who spoke French, or who supported students on their project assignments, and who helped out with fund-raising and other activities associated with the Language Club.

As a small department in a small school, budget limitations were a real factor for Susan. This kind of limitation was particularly instrumental in Susan's decisions about curriculum, that is to say, textbooks, the Valette series by D.C. Heath.

I got a sample of the textbook. It came time to order, and I think it was the same year, my first year. My first year, I used what was there, and after that I ordered. I replaced year by year, one text per year. It took a long time, but I started with Valette Level I, Valette Level II, and then Valette workbooks, Valette tapes. Then, probably we started Spanish I, Spanish II, then tapes for Level I, tapes for Level II, workbooks for Level I, and it's been a slow process. I'm not complaining. I might have gotten more if I'd asked for more. I just never felt like I could replace everything in the whole department. Most of the years, my budget's been around a thousand, fifteen hundred dollars. (Curric 2:12)





In this case, Susan built up the program in both languages year by year, book by book, until she had virtually a full set of materials for Levels I through III. As she says, "I just never felt like I could replace everything in the whole department."

On the other hand, Susan also perceived a lack of support. As described, the Guidance Director controlled the enrollment and scheduling. Susan was not consulted as part of the scheduling and enrollment, meaning that she did not know how many students had signed up for language only to be told by Guidance that they couldn't take it. After the fact, then, to maintain levels III and IV, Susan was forced to make significant accommodations in scheduling, and to combine levels into one class. Also, despite his support, the principal restricted Susan's role in the advertising and hiring of the part-time position. This meant that she was not able to hire a teacher who could teach both French and Spanish, which limited flexibility in the program.

Beyond this, there were students' attitudes toward foreign languages and learning. In Susan's view, students for the most part saw foreign languages as not really relevant or necessary, especially beyond the requisite two years for college. Susan found this "a very hard thing to combat." She also felt that students attitude toward learning was negative, that "it was not cool to show people that you . . . want to learn" (Curric 3:10). Such attitudes were part of a school atmosphere where teachers and administrators, in her view, were "afraid of change and want to stay traditional" (Bio 3:18). Administrators in particular maintained the "status quo" (Bio 3:18). Susan contrasted this with the view of education and of foreign languages in the 1960s, when both were more highly valued.

Susan also felt that her approach to teaching was sharply different from other teachers in the school who, in her estimation, were too traditional in their views of learning. Since one of her principal outcomes was that students enjoy language and language learning, she emphasized students' having fun as well as learning something. This didn't sit well with the traditionalists in the school:

My big thing, when I first started, was: so many people would say, "Oh I took four years [of foreign language]. I don't know a word of it." It was: get them to know something. Get them to like it. That was kind of a battle, because in [this school], there are a lot of traditionalists who say, "I don't care if they like the subject or not. They're here to learn. They have to listen, or they're not going to learn." People would look at me, and say--or I knew what they would think, because I'm not the type to go around and say, "Well I think it's important to have fun." Because I didn't want to have those conversations. I felt I would be banging my head against the wall. But, "Why do you do all these games, and things like that?" It's a little bit more noisy in my classroom. Students are sometimes are a little bit rowdy coming out if they sing a song or something like that. I think I felt like I could never quite say what I felt, but I did feel it was important to have fun, and important to feel like you've learned something. (Curric 1:17)

Not only did Susan a difference in views, but she also did not feel comfortable broaching the subject, considering it fruitless to do so.

A similar issue arose during this study when the topic of students not doing their homework came up at a teachers' meeting. Two sets of views were expressed: students should be denied privileges if they have not completed their homework versus students should be trusted to do their homework and suffer the consequences if they hadn't. Susan believed in trusting students first, that it was





"unfair to jump on someone before you know the story" (Obs 3:13). During the discussion, she noticed that other teachers had quite the opposite view:

The other thing I've found--I didn't say anything--I found a lot of the teachers are very severe. They take very draconic measures against kids who don't do homework. Even the principal said, "When I was teaching, if a student didn't do five homework assignments, they got one grade lower." Well, as a parent, that scares me. (Obs 3:13)

In certain respects, then, Susan was both supported in her work at the school, and yet not as much as she might have liked. She used the word "comfortable" to describe what it was like for her to teach there, in both a positive and negative sense:

I guess I'd have to say: comfortable. Or I wouldn't have stayed so long. It's comfortable. I mean that in a positive, and perhaps a negative sense. Positive, because I've pretty much been on my own to do what I want. I can go into class, and I don't feel as though there's a supervisor who's criticizing everything I do. I can try new methods. The students I have are there because they want to be, in most cases. I can take students on trips. There's a supportive faculty, and there's a supportive group of townspeople. Negative, because I don't find it as stimulating as I wish it could be, as exciting to teach. I wish students would say that they like school. That doesn't happen very often. (Bio 3:17)

"I've pretty much been on my own to do what I want." This phrase does crystallize Susan's conception of the context. As the sole language teacher for so many years, Susan developed the language program based on her own criteria, by and large. The key contextual factors seemed to be the following:

- the role of foreign language study in the school: to prepare students to enter colleges by providing two years of instruction
- the low enrollment levels for the third and fourth years of study, due to
  - prevailing attitudes in the school
  - lack of encouragement to students to enroll in language courses on the part of the Guidance Department
  - difficulty in scheduling time slots and classroom spaces
- limited foreign language teaching staff
  - limited number of class preparations
  - the need to combine classes and levels
- the small size of the school
  - a small enrollment pool of students
  - small classes
- limited resources
  - the need to stay with one textbook series because of budget

## Sources

In this section, I will explore the sources of Susan's conception of French. To a degree, some indication of sources is in the preceding descriptions of the different dimensions of this overall conception. This section begins with Susan's own description and moves on to connections with these dimensions.

Susan's diagram that illustrated her view of "contributions to who I am today" (Curric 2:1). She did not do this to explain what I have written in this chapter, but did so spontaneously prior to the fifth interview. Her diagram looked like this:



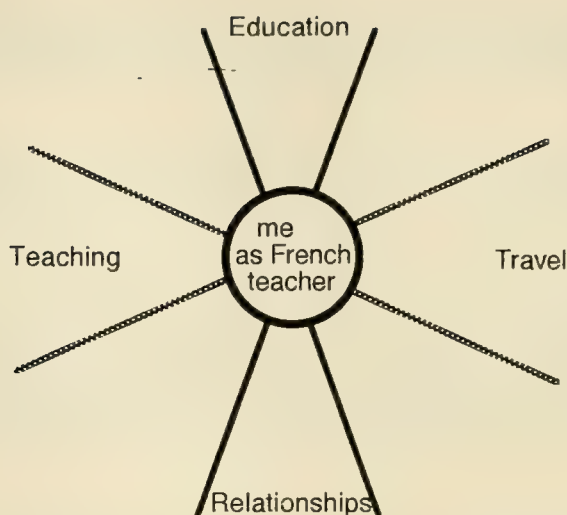


Figure 14: Who I Am Today

She described each of these parts of the diagram in this way:

If I am here in the center, and these have all been contributions to who I am today--who I am, what I am, and why I am.

This is my education. I feel it's very important, as to studying French at the university, going to France, my education after I graduated, the courses I've taken, and the knowledge that I continue to accumulate.

Travel has been important, also. Just the times I've traveled in high school, the places that I went in high school, and then after I started college, my sophomore year, my junior year. That would be continued: the trips that I've taken, apart from education.

This is my relationships. I tried to say "me as a French teacher," not me as a person that you are examining as a specimen. These are all the people that have been important in my life who have influenced me as far as French goes. Judy, my college roommate. I don't think my teachers necessarily determined who I am, but perhaps they should be included--that one [high school] French teacher I told you about. My friend Judy. My friends in Dijon--Brigitte and Marc. Jeanne--my cousin. the people at Le Cercle. Melissa at State College. Bill Furman--the language consultant, because I've been on alternate two boards, so that has made me feel competent perhaps in the language. . . . Jeff, a French teacher at The Bay School. Will. Jane, now. These people play a role in who I am. . . . Tina and Kyle, who were in my MAT class.

And over here, the teaching has had a big influence on where I am now as a French teacher. . . . Well, I think that has served to nourish. That has served to keep me going, that that's why I've been doing what I've been doing for so long, because I can open up a textbook, one of my textbooks that I use in class, and enjoy going through it. It's something that just feeds me. It changes enough so that I'm constantly learning. I'm learning either the language, or the culture, or new teaching techniques. The student teachers I've had have been all good experiences for me. I enjoyed sitting in the back of the classroom and watching someone teach. I enjoy being in a language class. I would love to be a supervisor--I'm not trying to do that, but I think I would enjoy it very much. So I think teaching has been very, very important in my career.

. . . I like the big bands coming in, almost like rivers going into the ocean. (Curric 2: 1-3)





Education, travel, relationships, and teaching: "four big bands, like rivers into an ocean" that have helped Susan become the French teacher that she is. She sees no single source, nor does she name any single event, person, or set of circumstances.

Here are connections that I see between these four sources and Susan's conceptions of French.

### ***Education***

Susan was referring here, it would seem, to her formal educational experiences, ranging from her initial high school courses in French, through the university and her junior year in France, the Spanish courses she took, to the MAT degree in Spanish. Also included were the workshops and institutes that she took in the summers.

She did not specify any particular connections to who she was as a French teacher here, although she did mention some in other interviews. For instance,

- the vertical and horizontal dimensions of her spiral ascension image were concepts that she originally encountered in her language teaching methods courses at the university. The essential role of grammar as a measure of performance in French seems to have originated in these courses, and through her methods teacher, Margaret, whom she mentions under relationships.
- her choice of the textbook series by Valette also originated in this methods course and was reinforced when Susan heard Valette speak at a conference before she had to select texts for the French program.
- she took a courses in art history and appreciation at the university, and she had a similar course during her junior year in Dijon, where the professor conducted field trips to local museums.
- her French program at the university emphasized literature, as well, and she continued to read in French after graduation and throughout her teaching career, for enjoyment and appreciation. She had a dream of one day living in France and studying literature.
- Susan cited her educational experiences in the Master's program as influential in her realization of the importance of concentrating on students' performance instead of her own.

### ***Travel***

Even though her first trip abroad did not occur until her freshman year at the university, travel was an integral part of her home life, as her father was a pilot for an international airline. In fact, part of her original motivation to study French came from her "goal: to travel, to live abroad" (Bio 1:5). Other connections that she mentioned include:



- Every year through the Language Club, she organized a field trip abroad to French- and Spanish-speaking countries. Even though this trip was not connected to the language program or curriculum, it did reflect her conception of "going beyond," and expanding students' horizons.
- Her own encounters and exchanges with native-speakers in these countries, and her observation of her students in these situations had influenced her conception that students should consciously define themselves as learners in order to cope successfully with misunderstandings.
- Her travel had broadened and deepened her own knowledge about the countries where the languages were spoken, particularly topics in culture, history, geography, and politics. In turn, this appeared to have influenced her conception that students should know about such topics, as well.

### ***Relationships***

Here Susan named specific persons with whom she had had or maintained a significant relationship. It seemed that these relationships were of two kinds: teaching relationships, and non-teaching relationships.

- Her teaching relationships were with fellow language teachers. An important feature was the exchange of teaching ideas and materials. Some of these relationships began in her college years and continued to the present day.
- Her relationship with the language consultant of the state certification board was important to Susan because it conferred a sense of "competence" that she did not apparently get from anyone else. This stood in sharp contrast to the status that her principal accorded her when it came to hiring and selecting teachers, and her scheduling conflicts with Guidance.
- Her relationship with Jeanne, her French cousin, was especially important to Susan. As Susan said, "She was probably a big influence on my decision to become a French teacher" (Bio 3:4). They met during Susan's junior year in France, and have kept the relationship strong ever since. Susan considered Jeanne a "mentor" in her study of French culture, and was the opposite of the stereotype that "French people are cold and arrogant" (Bio 3:4). Susan was also welcomed as a member of the family by the rest of Jeanne and her family.
- Susan also maintained a relationship with other native speakers in Dijon, whom she had met during her stay there. With Brigitte, now an English teacher in Dijon, she arranged homestays with French families for her students when they visited there.
- The relationships with the people in Le Cercle provided Susan with an opportunity to speak French and to meet native speakers from different countries. She liked the three American women who organized the meetings, and she attended the get-togethers as often as she could. Since the purpose of Le Cercle was to speak French, it does seem that attending was a reflection of Susan's conception of her role of "speaking French for a living."





- Susan drew many of her teaching activities from these relationships. She connected her use of film and video to Alex, a French teacher who was using these in his classes. Another teacher, Tom, was using the same textbooks, and Susan and he exchanged materials and teaching ideas. From Jane, she got the idea of dialogue journals. Will, of course, was instrumental in Susan's organization of the curriculum into binders.
- Although she did name her language teaching colleagues at the school, they were very recent relationships compared to the others. She did not mention any other teachers in her school as influential to who she was as a French teacher. As the sole language teacher in the school, Susan perceived that she needed to develop sustainable relationships related to language outside the school.

It is noteworthy that most of the relationships Susan mentions were all connected with the other three sources, her education, her teaching, and her travel.

### **Teaching**

Susan used a powerful image of teaching as a source of nourishment, "something that just feeds me." In particular, she mentioned the books and materials that she used to teach as sources of learning about the language or the culture, as well as teaching techniques, which allowed her to be "constantly learning."

- Susan had to teach all four levels of French, and she admitted that the upper level classes keep her "challenged," in that she was constantly pushed to the edge of her understanding and knowledge of the language. This might have influenced her conception of herself as a learner/practitioner of the language.
- In Susan's view, by teaching something, you learn it better, and "teaching has been one of the best ways to increase my proficiency" (Bio 2:2). This was the case for her teaching of literature, which allowed her to achieve the kind of appreciation that she had not done as a university student.
- Susan was curious and interested in teaching techniques, and in experimenting with new materials.
- She mentioned observation of others' teaching as a source of learning. Indeed, she used this as a source of teaching ideas. For example, Susan's use of projects came directly from her observations of another teacher using it in his German classes.
- Susan described her experiences as a language learner in intensive Spanish courses as an important source of teaching techniques and materials.



## Summary

As an overall summary of Susan's conceptions of teaching French, I offer the following schema:

### Context

"I'm pretty much on my own to do what I want" (Bio 3:17). The sole language teacher for 17 years, Susan built the language program in both French and Spanish. She had the freedom and support to choose what and how to teach. In a small school with limited space and competing courses, language study was an elective, generally intended for students going to college. Classes were small. Scheduling all levels of French and Spanish was an ongoing challenge, especially since the Guidance Director tended not to consult in matters of enrollment and scheduling. The principal decided to hire a part-time French teacher, and this put pressure on Susan to define the curriculum in ways that she had not previously articulated.

### Teacher Roles

Susan has a strong personal and professional connection to the language. She has numerous personal relationships conducted in French, including longtime friends and family in France. She sees herself as a learner/practitioner of French, a model of a French speaker to her students, and advocates language study in the school through her classes and through the Language Club.

In her teaching, she cultivates a relationship of interest and concern with her students, and in her choice and implementation of learning activities, she seeks to facilitate students' performance in the language.

### Students

Students are bound for college, and they need at least two years of language study. Susan sees students as serious learners who must be willing to do the real work of language learning, performing what they know. At the same time, she sees them as interesting and likable people who have lives of their own, senses of humor, concerns, feelings, and interests that need to be part of the class. Students do not all share the same abilities and aptitudes for foreign languages, which affects what she does as a teacher.

Students are affected by the prevailing attitude that foreign languages are not relevant, which makes motivating them a challenge. Students' after-school jobs are another challenge.

### Language Content

Language content for the first two levels is in large part determined by the D.C. Heath textbook series. In levels III and IV, the content varies according to the interests and abilities of students and teacher's interests. Grammar is the central content emphasis, with additional content areas consisting of structured conversations, literature, student research projects, films, songs, games, pronunciation, and preparation for college achievement tests. These content emphases, along with accompanying materials and learning activities, appear in three-ring binders for each level. These are the curriculum guides that the teacher draws from in teaching each level.

Susan sees grammar, especially verb tenses, and the four skills on a vertical plane. Vocabulary, cultural and other content areas are on a horizontal plane. Through performing what they know, students increase their ability to function in the language, moving up in a spiral ascension.

### Activities

There are a variety of learning activities in classes, all reflecting students using the language through reading, writing, listening or speaking. The emphasis is on students performing what they know to the best of their ability.

For Susan, the learning activities need to be doable, interesting, and challenging. Students need to know what they're working on and why, and it is also important that they enjoy the activities, that they have fun. Learning languages, however, is work, but students can have fun at the same time.

### Outcomes

The overall intentions for students in the language program was to increase their ability to function in the language, through their reading, writing, listening and speaking skills. Language learning was a matter of constantly performing what you know. Additional outcomes included enjoying the language and language learning, developing useful attitudes as a language learner, knowing about the countries where the language is spoken, using the language and content to expand one's thinking, and to prepare for college language courses.





*I'm not completely in agreement with that [Summary]. I tried to do something that I thought would be more the way I felt, but I'm not completely happy with this either.*

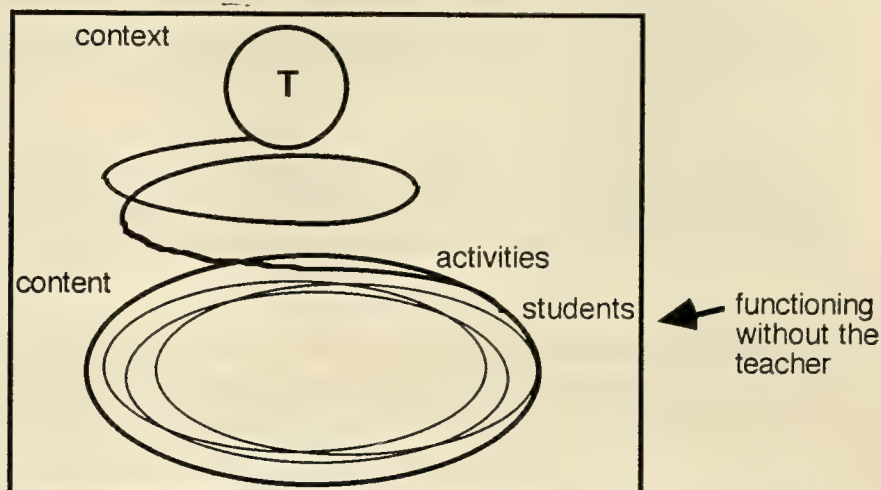


Figure 15: Summary

*What I did was put the teacher at the top, as the one who directs things. Then I had a coil coming off, because the teacher is really the one who plans the activities and chooses the content, but then it weaves in the students. As it goes around, you grab the activities, you grab the content, then you grab the students. Then you've got a big circle that involves the content, the activities, and the students, and it kind of forms a circle. The teacher can maybe not even be in the circle any more. The teacher can kind of stay out of it and watch this whole thing evolve. I guess I feel a little bit more comfortable with that, but still it's not exactly clear. But that's sort of the idea I wanted to portray, that it wasn't just a relationship where these three were sort of equal. Somebody has to be the catalyst and start off the whole series of events, the chain of events, and maybe even be more responsible for the planning of the content and the activities.*

PM: What about the outcomes?

*Well, that's what I was trying to get in here (referring to the big circle). I was trying to get the four different skills, and I wasn't sure how to do that. The content determines, the activities determine--if it's a writing activity or a speaking activity, it's going to be a little bit different. Maybe we need more circles here (bottom circle) for activities, I'm not sure. But I would love to have all four skills in here, and then the students really functioning more. It's like water, it gets down here (in the circle at the bottom of the coil) and it all sloshes around. (Epilogue: 5/8/96)*



## Epilogue

Susan and I met to review this account in May of the following year, roughly sixteen months after the final interview. Susan commented on the accuracy of the account, her reactions to it, and also on significant events that occurred in the interim.

Those of Susan's comments and reactions that reflected her views at the time of the interviews appear in the text at those relevant points indented, in italics, and entitled "Epilogue." Other comments that reflected her views sixteen months later are inserted below.

On the whole, Susan found the account to be accurate. Moreover, she found it enjoyable to read and instructive to see her evolution as a teacher:

My overall impression, the last time I read this, was that I enjoyed it. The reading was smoother as I went on.

It's fun to re-read it. It helps me to realize the evolution of my feeling on teaching, and where I've come from. I found it very interesting just for myself, why I'm doing what I'm doing.  
(Epilogue: 5/8/96)

Significant events that occurred in the interim period included the following:

- Susan's part-time colleague, Jane, left the school at the end of the previous academic year. The position was advertised as it had been before, a part-time teacher of French. Dave, a retired government employee, was hired to teach three French courses.
- Dave's retirement status allowed the school to apply for a federal grant which would pay for a portion of his teaching time. This meant that the school could in effect support a full-time language teaching position by paying for a half-time position. Susan and Dave proposed that the additional teaching hours be used to support two new courses, tentatively entitled Practical French and Practical Spanish. These courses would be open to students who would not normally enroll in the existing French or Spanish courses. These were the equivalent of the "conversation" courses that Susan had envisioned and described the previous year, and she was excited about teaching them.
- The the role of Guidance in scheduling of language classes continued. Susan's French III class was again split into two sections, as it had been in the previous year. Also, because of the advent of the two new courses, Guidance was planning to put Dave's French III and IV classes together for the upcoming year, a prospect that worried Susan. Again, this highlighted the ongoing challenge that Susan dealt with in her efforts to build a strong language program.

Next year, I'm really kind of worried. Not Dave, I think Dave will do fine. But he's got French III and IV together, and I think that's really unfair, because he's got a good French IV--I think he's got four. Then in French III, he's got about eight. To have those together is just not fair to the students, because they're at such different ability levels.





There's a good enough group size so that they should be independent. But they [the school, Guidance] are not being real accommodating. They're going to give him two practical courses and then put the French IIs and IVs together.

I'm not in a position to say if there's any other alternative. I really don't know. We just have to, I guess, go along with it. I guess I could complain to the principal. We both feel, though, that this is sort of a transition year. We'll do the best that we can without causing too much of a stir, and try to get through it. But boy, sometimes if you can get these things settled at the beginning, it makes the whole year a lot better. It's questionable as to what is the best action sometimes, whether it's better just accept what you get and work with it, or to make waves. I'm not sure right now. We're thrilled that we're going to have two full-time people, so we kind of figure, "Let's just just see how it plays out." (Epilogue: 5/8/96)

- Susan noted as particularly significant the influence of her new colleague, Dave. As her former colleague, Jane, had done, Dave caused Susan to to examine her own teaching, especially in terms of organization, of innovation in content and activities, and of teaching style.

The biggest thing is that I now have a colleague [Dave] who teaches in a more traditional method, which is to teach about grammar, rather than to teach in the language, although I believe that he considers speaking very important, and to see how important organization is to him. I'm very influenced by people around me. I like to get new ideas all the time, and I'm very influenced by all that. That doesn't mean I want to jump ship immediately and change my way of thinking, but I guess it's forcing me--the fact of having another colleague--to question the way I do things. I'm realizing that I'm not a teacher who uses last year's materials. Sometimes that bothers me, because I know that I'm inventing the wheel almost every year. I really am. I give a lot of time to teaching. There are teachers in [this school] who are so well prepared that they just pull out last year's materials every day, and have their lessons all set. They're very good teachers. They perhaps build upon what they've done, and I think that's admirable.

What saves me is when I go to Foreign Language Teaching Forum, and I talk to other language teachers who are doing completely different things this year than they did last year. One woman said--at the very last meeting that I went to--"This year I'm having my students do a wedding. They're writing a wedding. They're acting it out, and they're learning indirect and direct object pronouns by writing the service, their vows." We talked about how we could never do the same thing year after year, so I know I'm not alone and that really helps me, because sometimes I think, "How come I didn't learn from what I did last year and just use it and present it again?" But I guess I just have to tell myself that that's not me, that part of the thing that keeps me interested is that I'm always learning, because I'm picking up books to read, new literature. I'm looking through literary works to pick new ones out, to teach more and better each year.

Maybe by having colleagues now, or seeing other people's style, I question what I'm doing, but I can't see myself changing either. I can't see myself having a binder and going to it and teaching exactly the same way. I guess the whole idea of being organized is forcing me to say, "Just what is organization to me? To what point do I want to be organized?" I have a lot a choice in what I do and how organized I want to be. I think I'm getting to the point where I want the syllabus, like Jane and I talked about, I want to know what grammar points I need to cover this year. Sort of like we've done here [referring to descriptions of content], but I would put it down more completely, I suppose, but we're still in the process of deciding upon it. I want that list of things I need to do this year, but I want to do it in the way I want to do it. I want to be able to teach things at different times of the year. I don't want to have to feel that I have to cover three lessons in this particular framework of time. So I think that's probably good. (Epilogue: 5/8/96)



- Susan reiterated the importance of experimentation in her teaching. She described her continued exploration of French in Action. Her previous enthusiasm for these materials was now somewhat tempered by a concern about the level of language and the target audience. In describing this, Susan again emphasized the critical role of providing students with a doable, or "attainable" task, with the language within students' reach.

As I was reading this, my reaction to it was that I'm still experimenting. Talking about French in Action, I'm still experimenting with French in Action. I still like the freedom to pick and choose. We're looking now at a series of textbooks. As much as I've enjoyed using French in Action, sometimes I look at it with fresh eyes. I think to myself, "This is so above their head. If I really believe in L+1<sup>3</sup>, what's this doing to students?"

Some of them, they're sitting there listening to Pierre Capretz (on the video) saying, "Don't worry! Don't get frustrated. Just stay with me. You'll understand. I promise you." But how long are students are going to stick with it? I'm not sure everybody would. As I'm looking at new videos, I've shown some to students. I ask them, "Now what do you like, French in Action, Destinos, or this?" Students have been telling me, "I like this. It's got younger kids. It's easier." Something other than French in Action. These are great, but they might be a little bit collegiate. I'm afraid that kids in high school might like something they can relate to better: kids their own age, blue jeans, and maybe not doing the college things that these other students are doing.

So I believe in L+1, I always have. Keep it at their level, but a little bit harder. Like a carrot right in front of them, whether it's a text or conversation. Now all of a sudden, I'm showing them French in Action, which can be kind of frustrating. When I'm doing all I can to make it attainable, but maybe it's still not quite right. Maybe I should be gearing it down a little bit, more to where they're at. I guess if I were making up a video, I would definitely make it culturally very rich, but the language is so critical. the level of whatever they're reading. You just can't take any old literary work and give it to them and expect them to do it. Especially depending on how you teach. If you sat there and just translated it, like Latin, I suppose you could take anything and do it slowly just one sentence at a time. But if you want to teach it as a living text and discuss it, you really have to pick something that's really, really not too much above their level. That's so critical. (Epilogue: 5/8/96)

- As in past summers, Susan was planning to experiment with a new textbook series by trying it out in the French program at the private school, which offered her a sort of testing ground for materials.

We are looking at new textbooks, trying to find texts that are perhaps just a little bit more exciting, but that still have a lot of the same things we find in our old textbook. . . .

That's a hard one, because it took so long to build [the present textbook series] up in our small school. But I think so. This summer, when I teach at [the private school], I'm going to try the EMC [series], *Le Français Vivant*. I have everything that goes with it, and it will be a good opportunity to try something different and maybe we can incorporate it here. (Epilogue: 5/8/96)

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<sup>3</sup> This refers to a component of a theory language acquisition advanced by Stephen Krashen. L+1 implies students' present language ability (L) with the addition of new language material that is just beyond this ability (+1). (See The Natural Approach: Language Acquisition. S. Krashen and T. Terrell. 1983. Alemany Press: San Francisco).





These events, on the whole, showed a continuation of themes and issues that Susan had articulated in the previous year.

I think I've learned more about myself and my own teaching style in the course of our interviews, and also just by reading this. I think it's put things more in a definite framework.  
(Epilogue: 5/8/96)



## Molly Evans

At the time of this study, Molly Evans was 41 years old. Married, with two children, she and her husband both taught in the local public schools in this small New England town of 12,000. He was an elementary school teacher, and she taught French and Spanish in the high school. In 1984, Molly was hired as a full-time member of the Foreign Language Department and she has taught there for the past 10 years.

The high school is located on the edge of town in a large sprawling collection of attached buildings, including the middle school. There were about 900 students enrolled in the high school. The Foreign Language Department was located on the second floor of the original building. Teachers also taught French, Spanish, German, and an introduction to foreign languages course in the adjoining middle school buildings.

Molly began her career as a French teacher in a small private school, following her graduation from the university in 1979 as a French education major. After teaching there a year, she received a scholarship for graduate study, and a year later, in 1981, she obtained a Masters of Education degree with a certification in bilingual education, and sufficient credits for a teaching certificate in Spanish, as well. She and her husband, an elementary school teacher, relocated to a private school in New England, where she taught French and Spanish for two years. In 1983, they moved again to another state, where her husband had landed a job. Molly did general substitute teaching for a year, and then accepted a part-time replacement position for a teacher on leave from the Foreign Language Department, where she was hired the following year, 1984, as a full-time teacher of French and Spanish. Aside from a six-month maternity leave in 1987 and a one-year reduced workload at 80% because of a reduction in force decision in 1989, Molly taught full-time. For the most part, she taught beginning to intermediate levels in French and Spanish, with the exception of two years where she taught the higher level in French.

During her tenure at this school, she accompanied students on trips on two occasions, once to Montreal, Quebec for a weekend trip in 1985, and on a two-week travel and homestay trip to Majorca in 1994. In 1995, she was to accompany a group on a homestay trip to France, and in the fall of 1994, she hosted her French counterpart and helped organize the French students' stay in the school and community. In the summer of 1994, she and her family traveled to Saguenay, Quebec, where they participated in a whale watch excursion, conducted in French.

She took courses during this time, as well. These included a course in 1991 on counseling strategies for teachers, and courses on reflective mentoring in each of the two years preceding this study, and during the fall semester of 1994, as well. These latter courses were related to supervision and mentoring of teachers in training in conjunction with a school partnership program involving a nearby





graduate school. Over the years, she attended various language teaching conferences, and in 1992, she and a colleague gave a presentation on oral proficiency testing at the Northeast Conference.

Molly began her study of French in the fifth grade, and she continued to study it through high school. She did well in these studies, and in her junior year, she traveled to France in the summer to spend a month in a locally sponsored exchange program. She stayed with a French family in Provence. When she entered the university, she took more French courses, but her teachers did not inspire her. After a year, she lost interest in school altogether, and her grades dropped to the point where she was on probation. *I flunked out.* She gained re-admittance and decided, on the recommendation of her advisor, to major in French and education in order to secure a job upon graduation. She applied herself and achieved high grades, and she found French teachers that sparked her interest. In the summer of her junior year, she traveled as a tourist in Europe for two months with her husband, visiting France and Spain.

*It was being able to be successful in class and being able to use French outside of class that really captivated me, and encouraged me to have success as a learner, and made me decide that this would be my field, since I was turned off for a while and got back into it. And I know that's something that snags kids: they know they'll be able to use the language for something fun. (Epilogue: 4/12/96)*

In her early years as a French teacher, she used techniques and materials that she had experienced as a student, and she used textbooks. When she arrived at her present school, she entered a language department where teachers were also using textbook series for the language courses, though they were encouraged to supplement these. As time passed, a tradition of teacher autonomy developed, where teachers were not bound to a fixed textbook and encouraged to develop their own materials. In this environment, teachers shared materials and ideas, planned together, and generally agreed upon instructional priorities. As time passed, Molly became more aware of students' responses to her language teaching. She became interested in their performance, and with a colleague, she developed a curriculum project for the beginning levels that featured oral testing. At about the same time, teachers in the Department began to move toward organizing course curricula around themes, an approach that Molly adopted, as well. Inspired by practices in elementary education, she began experimenting with activity-based teaching, where students work more independently and collaboratively at a variety of in-class tasks. Activity-based teaching conformed to Molly's view of her role as a teacher and was a significant motivating force in her work. This approach was also later adopted by the Department, as it was found to be consistent with proficiency goals.

In the year prior to this study, two major institutional decisions occurred that affected Molly and her teaching during the time of this study. First, the school instituted block scheduling. Block scheduling doubled the time for a class meeting from 45 to 88 minutes and shortened the length of courses from two semesters to one. Second, the foreign language Department decided to implement a proficiency-based curriculum, and reconfigured Levels I-V into three levels, corresponding to the levels



described in the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines<sup>1</sup>, namely, Novice, Intermediate, and Advanced. Changes in the curriculum involved changes in the levels and groupings of students in classes, leading to changes in content and learning outcomes. Together, these two changes meant that Molly had to plan newly configured courses with longer class periods in mind.

### ***The Situation***

In our first interview in early September, just after fall classes had begun, Molly mentioned that she was having a hard time getting materials ready for class, something she referred to as "scrambling for materials" (Bio 3:7). Not only that, she felt a great deal of pressure to do so. The changeover to block scheduling with longer class periods and shorter, more intense courses was one contributing factor. Another was the Foreign Language Department's shift to a proficiency-based curriculum and all its attendant changes, such as reconfiguration of levels, requirements for advancement, and the expectation that teachers create materials and not rely on a course textbook. In effect, Molly was planning new courses as she taught them, a dynamic that was to continue throughout the semester.

In addition to the impact of these changes instituted by the school and the Department, Molly had decided to put into practice a teaching approach she had successfully experimented with in some of her classes the previous year, "activity-based classes." This approach involved students working in small groups on a variety of self-directed learning tasks with Molly in a facilitator role, a role that she preferred as a teacher. To carry out activity-based classes, Molly needed to devise sufficient activities and to come up with the necessary materials. Also, her adoption of activity-based classes meant that students had to adapt as well, and her management of their responses to this approach occupied her during the semester as well.

Together, these factors contributed to a pressure-filled circumstance for Molly. As the semester progressed, she began to question this situation and her role, as well. In fact, the particulars of this circumstance had pushed Molly to define her priorities and principles as a teacher of French and Spanish in this school, and as an educator in general.

Let us examine this circumstance in greater detail.

### ***The Proficiency-Based Curriculum***

At the end of the 1993 school year, two members of the Foreign Language Department, the Department Head and a senior teacher, proposed that the curricula for French, Spanish, and German be based on proficiency, specifically the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines. This proposal was accepted by Molly and the other language teachers in the Department. During the summer, the Department had meetings to plan the program. By the time of the new school year in September, the planning process had not been completed, and teachers continued planning meetings throughout the semester. The 1994-95 school year, in Molly's words, was

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<sup>1</sup> The American Council of Teachers of Foreign Languages developed a set of guidelines to describe levels of proficiency in foreign languages. These are described in Teaching Language in Context (2nd ed.) Omaggio-Hadley, Alice. 1993. Heinle & Heinle: Boston.





to be a "transition year" (Curric 2:4) during which teachers were to put together materials, activities, and procedures to then be improved the following year.

The decision to use proficiency as the focus for the curriculum was based on teachers' perceptions that although students were advancing through the levels in the previous program, they were not demonstrating sufficient proficiency or ability for the higher levels. Students were promoted to the next level based on a passing grade, which was not necessarily an indicator of their ability in the language. Also, eligibility for the exchange trips to French- and to Spanish-speaking countries was determined by grade and course level--third year and higher, juniors and seniors, not by proficiency. This meant that some students were going on the exchange program with a proficiency level that, for some teachers, seemed insufficient to cope with the demands of the trip.

In order to accommodate these students of lesser abilities, teachers had to lower the challenge and level of difficulty in the upper-level courses. In turn, this meant that the more able and proficient students in these same classes could not advance as quickly and as extensively as they might have done. To address this problem, teachers decided to make proficiency in the language the requirement for students to advance to the next level. Students' proficiency would be determined by their performance on an Oral Proficiency Interview examination, taken as part of the final course exam for students interested in moving up to the next level.

The Foreign Language Department used the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines for the requirement to pass from one level to the next, basing advancement on students' "competency" in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. They also decided to change the configuration of their courses to reflect the ACTFL descriptions of levels of proficiency. The courses Level I, II, III, IV, or V became Novice, Intermediate, and Advanced. Within the Novice and Intermediate levels, The Department made further distinctions of -Mid/-High and Survival/Expanded, respectively. In a Novice class, for instance, students could be grouped as Novice-Mid or Novice-High, depending on their abilities.

The shift to proficiency as the guiding principle in the Foreign Language Department involved modification not only of advancement requirements and course configurations, but also modifications of previous curricula for these new levels: Novice and Intermediate. By and large, this involved re-assigning content areas and activities primarily from the old system of Levels I to III into the new configuration of Novice and Intermediate levels, with the Advanced Level apparently receiving less attention. In fact, the Advanced Level students, according to Molly, "... are doing pretty much what we always used to do at Fourth and Fifth Year level...reading books about history and civilization...seeing some films, discussing the content" (Curric 3:9). Therefore, the reconfiguration resulted in the generic curriculum guidelines specifically for Novice and Intermediate Levels, applicable mostly to French, Spanish, and German to a lesser extent, since the German teacher used a text that is "proficiency-based and high interest."





### ***Thematic Units***

At the heart of the Novice and Intermediate curricula were Thematic Units. For each Level, they appeared as a one-page list of names of topics, or subject matter areas. As topics, they suggested more specific content items or areas, since they were not broken down into any component parts. It was up to the teachers to specify what these topics would involve, as far as specific content items were concerned. The list of Thematic Units consisted of Survival and Expanded units, which corresponded to the -Mid and -High distinctions of the ACTFL descriptions. Thus, Survival units were at a more fundamental level than Expanded, so that students' differing levels could be addressed in a single course. The Thematic Units were the core elements for the curriculum, but there was no established sequence that teachers had to follow. Each teacher was free to organize the sequence of the Thematic Units as s/he saw fit.

An examination of the list of topics (Novice/Intermediate Thematic Units: Sept 94) showed the multifaceted nature of the Thematic Units. For the Intermediate Level, for instance, they included specific communicative tasks (Explaining Feelings, Negotiating & Explaining, Directions), situations (Restaurant and Market, Doctor), vocabulary topics (Money, Telephone, Household), as well as subject matter areas (Geography, Culture and History). In addition to these, "other material to be addressed in many thematic units" (ibid.) was listed, and this material included grammar points (Comparison, Past Tense, Future), additional communicative tasks (Circumlocution, Description, Likes and Dislikes), and what looked to be teaching techniques or learning activities (Journals, Narratives, Dictation, Dictionary Skills).

On the whole, the -Mid/-High and Survival/Expanded Thematic Units for Novice and Intermediate Levels seemed to reflect the "communicative tasks and social situations" described in the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines. However, beyond generalized descriptions such as "personal history and leisure time activities," situations and communicative tasks were not specified in the Guidelines themselves, nor was there any mention of themes, or of grammar, for that matter. Instead, the Guidelines described what persons were able to do as listeners, speakers, readers, and writers of the language.

In the Department descriptions to students of Novice and Intermediate classes (Foreign Language 1994-1995), content was described in general terms. Novice students, for instance, "will learn to use basic vocabulary for simple, everyday conversation and explore language concepts and culture." Intermediate students "will learn vocabulary and grammar necessary to fulfill social and survival needs as a traveler..., use the vocabulary and structures necessary to communicate successfully in a variety of everyday situations..., speak and write about the past, present and future on a variety of common themes." Again, although the lists of Thematic Units did name content areas, the specific vocabulary, grammar, communicative tasks, and social situations are not named.

What went into a Thematic Unit, then, could vary. It was up to the teacher to specify and sequence the content for each Thematic Unit, as well as to choose and sequence the Thematic Units for the course, with a focus on preparing students to meet the "competencies" of a particular Level. There was an assumption that





teachers of the same Level (of the same language) would cover the same content, although in Molly's view, teachers were "doing different stuff" (Curric 1:22).

The Thematic Units did reflect communicative use of language in social situations, circumstances which some of the language students would likely encounter as part of the exchange programs that the Department organized and implemented for students of French and Spanish. The trips, as previously mentioned, were for juniors and seniors. More precisely, because of the reconfiguration, they were now options for Intermediate and Advanced students, whose proficiency met the requirements. However, the trip itself did not appear to figure as a primary organizing principle for the Thematic Units.

This task of specifying content and activities for Thematic Units, according to Molly, was a major preoccupation of teachers this semester, the task of "scrambling for materials" (Bio 3:8).

### **Materials**

There were no specified materials for the curriculum. There was no official textbook, nor any other core set of materials formally linked to the curriculum or any Level. It was teachers' responsibility to find and prepare the materials for the Thematic Units they were teaching. Content was presented to students through handouts, which were either teacher-made or photocopied pages from other sources. As the course progressed, students assembled these handouts in a three-ring binder, which became their textbook for the course. Also, as teachers located and prepared these materials, they put them into a Departmental file for that Level, to be available for mutual future reference in course planning.

Because there was no textbook (using a textbook was considered "a heresy" in the Department, according to Molly), teachers had to rely on their own sources, those of their colleagues, and those of the Department for course materials and activities. Actually, this seemed to have been the situation in the Department since five years previously, when textbooks were dropped as a requirement, and the "scramble for materials" began.

We were teaching thematically, and have been--and every year a little bit more so--for at least five years. Which means, we're very used to scrambling for materials. (Bio 3:7)

This drift away from textbooks, according to Molly, was prompted because the "agenda" these books impose was too confining for teachers. Some teachers, Molly among them, moved to organizing their courses around themes. A few years ago, Molly and another teacher had worked on a curriculum development project for Levels I and II. The result was thematically based, and this served as an early impetus for the Department to move in this direction. In fact, last year it became a Departmental "directive" to teachers to teach thematically.

In the previous curriculum configuration of Levels I-V, teachers tended to teach the same Levels and languages. Over the years, they built up course materials and activities for courses, or as Molly put it, "my stuff" (Bio 3:20). In fact, she described her feelings of giving her stuff for Spanish II over to another teacher last year, part of reassignment of courses, as very traumatic, like giving up "my child" (ibid.). With the



reconfiguration and the new Levels this year, however, these course materials did not suffice. Molly needed more "stuff."

It did appear that there were textbooks or supplementary materials that teachers used on a regular basis. In the case of Molly's Intermediate French course, for example, she made consistent use of a text called Conversation Situations (G. Taylor, 1989, Longman: New York), which contained many of the situations listed in the Thematic Units. There were about twenty copies of this book, almost enough for a class set. Molly did make it available in class for students to use in certain activities for some Thematic Units, such as Hotel, and Packing & Customs. Also, Molly used materials from Vidéo Passeport, which contained situations similar to those in the Thematic Units. She showed video excerpts and used copied pages from the accompanying text with her class as part of their work on the Hotel unit.

### ***Block Scheduling***

The move to 88-minute periods and block scheduling was a school-wide innovation. This change had a number of impacts on the Foreign Language Department during the semester.

Because the duration of class meetings was doubled, the length of a course was reduced from two semesters to one. Students could now complete a year-long course in one semester. Those "kids who came in with high interest, motivation, and talent who are really running with the ball" (Bio 3:8) would now be able to move through the Levels at a more rapid pace. Molly contrasted the old and new systems for such students:

Under the old system, they would have had to go through a whole year of I, pick it up immediately and be bored, then review all that stuff again in the second year, and be bored again, and move forward a little bit. Now they can just accelerate vertically right out of that level. (Bio 3:8)

This impact, even though it affected a minority of language students, was an important one for the Department.

The increase in the intensity of language courses meant that teachers had to prepare more material than in previous years. In addition, because of the internal divisions, they needed to prepare additional material for Survival and Expanded Thematic Units to address the two levels in one course. Even without the changes in the curriculum outlined above, this would have meant additional planning time for teachers. However, when coupled with the curriculum changes, block scheduling did place an even greater planning burden on foreign language teachers' shoulders this semester.

Another impact of the scheduling changeover involved scheduling student advancement. Intermediate students who successfully met the requirements for the Advanced Level at the end of the first semester would have to wait until the fall semester of the next school year to take the Advanced course, since it was only offered once a year in the present configuration. For Intermediate students who did not succeed in the exam or who elected not to move up, they could take the Intermediate Level again for credit in the second semester. This meant that teachers would have to adjust the content for these students. In other words, they





would have to assure that students were not doing the same material a second time, even though they would be taking the same Level again.

Students who qualified for Advanced would thus go without language study for a semester and the summer months. To Molly, this raised questions about their retention of material. Would too much time have elapsed for them to maintain the proficiency they had attained?

The doubled class period did allow teachers to spend more time on material and activities. However, this increase in class time put additional pressure on teachers to make material and activities interesting and involving. This pressure, according to Molly, came from students, who expressed their discontent with classes and learning activities they considered boring. As Molly described the response in the Foreign Language Department, the decision was to shift the nature of instruction more toward "activity-based classes" (Curric 2:6). This activity-based approach stood in contrast to the lecture-based approaches that, in Molly's estimation, students encountered in other subject matters in the school. As she put it,

Kids do not like to be lectured at. In fact, I think they're confused about what a lecture actually even is. They just don't like teacher-directed activities. (Curric 3:15)

The move to block scheduling thus not only contributed to changes in curriculum content, but in approaches to instruction, as well.

### ***Activity-Based Classes***

This "activity-based" approach, as Molly described it, consisted of the teacher setting up a number of learning tasks that students were to undertake during the class period, a "menu of activities" (Curric 3:3). Students worked alone or in small groups to accomplish tasks on the menu, and they were responsible for budgeting their time and for completing their work. Students were able to work at their own pace and on material that was within their ability range. In this way, Survival and Expanded levels could work at their respective proficiency levels within an Intermediate Level class. In this approach, there were fewer "teacher-directed activities" (Curric 3:15), where the teacher worked with the entire class as the focus of attention. Instead, the teacher was free to circulate among the students, monitor their work, or engage in one-on-one tasks with individuals or small groups.

Molly said that the approach appealed to students. They didn't want to be lectured at, and they responded readily to the opportunity to do different things and to work in groups on their own. To her, it allowed for "student-to-student interaction and engagement" and use of time that was "enjoyable and productive" (Journal 10/12/94). At the same time, she also recognized that there were some drawbacks, particularly when students were interacting among themselves in small groups, without the guidance of a teacher:

...we like to think that we have a new activity-based kind of teaching, with kids doing a lot of different activities in the course of one class, and I think many of us--I know I do--usually have a brief whole class warm-up, where I feel like I'm interacting with kids in the target language, and that's good. We used to do a lot more of that, but now we do that for a little while, and we turn them loose, and they're interacting with each other in English about the target language. We may have lost something along the way. (Curric 2:21)

The primary loss she cited here was significant: decreased use of the target language by the students.



| *Yes, less second language, and they hear it less from the teacher. (Epilogue: 4/12/96)*

Teaching activity-based classes appeared to be a semi-official approach to instruction in the Department. Molly characterized it as "an individual decision which has Departmental support" (Curric 3:1) one which "kind of became Department modus operandi", although "not everybody does it to the same extent" (Curric 3:2). For Molly, however, using the activity-based approach was a very important part of her teaching this year, one that she called "the new twist that keeps this from being boring" (Curric 3:21).

### **Colleagues**

There were seven teachers in the Department, including the Department Head, who assumed this post 12 years ago. Most had been teaching in the school for at least ten years, and some for almost twenty years. In Molly's view, even though there were differences of opinion, they had much in common, and there was a spirit and practice of collaboration among them:

The Department is small, and we've always really enjoyed talking about what we do, and have gotten a lot of ideas from each other. (Bio 3:8)

Teachers met regularly to discuss the new curriculum and to work out the details of its implementation. Putting their activities into the common folders for each Level was one instance of this collaboration. Later on, as the end of the semester approached, teachers met to decide upon criteria and questions for the Oral Proficiency Interview at Novice and Intermediate Levels.

This circumstance thus gathered a number of elements that Molly, and the other teachers in the Department, especially those teaching the new Novice and Intermediate Levels, had to manage. These are summarized as follows:

- a shift to block scheduling in the school
- implementation of a proficiency-based curriculum in the department
- reconfiguration of previous courses into new ones: Novice, Intermediate
- continuation of the departmental policy of not using textbooks
- expectation to teach activity-based classes
- planning on a day-to-day basis

To summarize this accumulation of events and its effect on Molly, the reconfiguration of courses and block scheduling meant that she had a new course to teach, Intermediate French, and that she had to teach it in a single semester through longer class periods. Because the content in the curriculum was not specified beyond the general topics in the Thematic Units, and because there were no textbooks, Molly had to identify content. She also had to find activities for twice the amount of class time. Adding to this incessant search for activities was her changeover to a fully activity-based class, an important strategy in making learning relevant, enjoyable, and productive. This meant that she had to find or devise a menu of activities for each class, which involved coordination of groups of students, activities, and materials--written, recorded, or photocopied. Taken together, these factors contributed to the situation of "scrambling for materials."





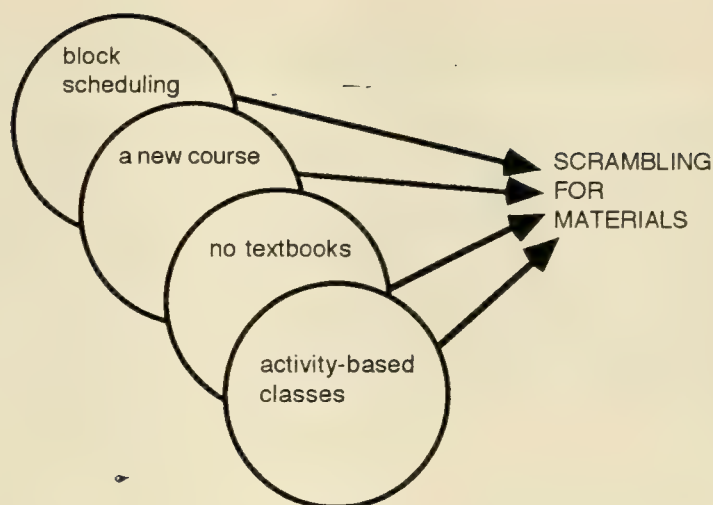


Figure 16: Scrambling for Materials

This scrambling meant that Molly was spending a lot of time planning lessons, more than she had done in previous years. She was putting together her lessons on a day-to-day basis, staying just ahead of the students. This intensified feeling of scrambling led her to question certain aspects of the Departmental reconfiguration of courses and levels, her shift to full-fledged activity-based classes, and her role as teacher.

She questioned whether the material presented to the students was adequate, or complete:

We were talking about the weakness and the strength of the program. I had a couple thoughts about that. One weakness, maybe, is obviously related to the materials, and lack of, and the fact that maybe kids are coming out with a background that's really full of holes. Our curriculum is just kind of dreamed up out of our own heads--both the curriculum and also a unit plan. Since we create the stuff, what if I don't think of everything? A good text might. So there may be some serious omissions in what's being covered. (Curric 3:1)

| *Plus, in a semester course, less content is presented. (Epilogue: 4/12/96)*

Because, as Molly put it, the "curriculum is just kind of dreamed up out of our own heads," she was concerned that there might be "omissions" of material, omissions that a "good text" might include. This pressure to think of everything would be eased by such a text. As she went on to say:

Maybe a good, up-to-date text would have vocabulary, some grammar, and maybe a cultural component, and have this all really skillfully interwoven, and maybe we're just blasting right past the cultural component, or something. (Curric 3:1)

The lack of specificity in the Departmental curriculum, along with the dearth of resource materials, especially an appropriate textbook, put demands on Molly to scramble to define what to teach. Because of this situation, she was forced to "think of everything," which led her to voice a parallel question about the authenticity of the material presented:

We are encouraging them to speak a lot, but they really are wildly inaccurate, and maybe our whole approach "Departmentally"--again, put that in quotes--we're turning kids loose to work with the very little materials that we can give them, really. They don't have any authentic models, except for an occasional feature film. We make the tapes. Or, they're just inventing



stuff, and maybe by the time we catch it, maybe that's how they've learned it. So, we're encouraging them to really own it and work with it, and we really have given up a lot of control over what they do--which may be a weakness, we'll see. (Curric 3:1)

This question clearly related to the nature of the material presented to students, namely, its degree of authenticity. However, it also revealed the connection between materials and activities, i.e. how the material was to be learned. In this instance, Molly was referring to learning activities that allowed students to choose or identify what they wanted to express in the language, an important outcome for her. At the same time, she was expressing a tension that existed between providing students with authentic material and providing them with opportunities to invent and "own" the material. The tension existed because students could not invent authentic language, yet they were likely to learn more if they invented it, and thus attained some involvement or ownership of the language.

In terms of scrambling for materials, then, Molly had to deal with this tension, and somehow balance the choice of material with the choice of learning activities. Moreover, because of her wholesale shift to activity-based classes, she had added to the number of activities she needed for every class. Thus, not only was there pressure to balance material and activities, there was additional pressure to find more of both for the new 88-minute class periods.

It is important to note that scrambling for materials was not a new phenomenon for Molly, nor for other teachers in the Department, who had been teaching thematically--without a textbook--for five years. Each teacher was used to putting together his or her own "stuff" for courses they taught. With the changes in scheduling and curriculum, however, the scrambling took on an added degree of intensity.

In Molly's case, the increased intensity was taking its toll on her.

Sometimes the task of planning, which is so overwhelming, is unbelievable. (Obs Int 1:1)

She described it as "difficult," as a "drain" (ibid.), as a "mad rush" (Obs Int 2:19), even as "crazed":

I feel crazed. Too many balls in the air at once, because of having to provide different things going on within a class at the same time. (Obs Int 1:1)

Molly's feelings about the situation contributed to her questioning the worth of continuing:

I think a serious drawback of the job is the pace. No matter where you teach in a public school, you feel like you're running and rushing. I find myself running and rushing when I don't have to, and wolfing food, even when I'm not watching the clock, just because that's what I'm used to doing. Doing two things at once because that's what I usually have to do, and I think it's sick. I think some day, if this hasn't become apparent already from our conversations, or if it has a place further down the line before you wrap this all up, I think I've got to get out, or it's going to kill me. (Obs Int 1:1)

This questioning of the situation was connected as well to a larger set of questions that Molly posed during this semester, which involved her view of herself and her role as a teacher in this school. As she put it, "I think this year that I'm having right now is clearly going to be a turning point of some kind." (Obs Int 2:24) In one way, she





linked this experience to personal transformations: "I think it's just because of who I am, getting older and changing." (Obs Int 3:1).

In another way, she questioned her suitability to the teacher role.

I just think I became a teacher by default. I never went through high school thinking that I would ever want to be a teacher. My skill was language, and I wasn't adventurous enough to do anything else with it. There are so many days when I think--and there have been through the years, and I'm sure there will be more--that I'm in the wrong business. I'm an introvert. I'm shy. I don't like to make people do things that they don't want to do. I'm not really an entertainer. I'm not funny. So, I feel like, this is the wrong place for me. But on a good day, it's great. But on a day when the workload just seems to be intolerable--and that's many days--or the prep time is so inadequate--that's a real issue in our school this year, I've got to get out of here. For my own sanity. (Bio 3:14)

As is evident here, this depth of self-questioning cut to the core of Molly's image of herself as a teacher, and also her image of what a teacher ought to be. The "intolerable" pressure of workload and insufficient prep time pushed her to reconsider her choice of this profession, one that she backed into, so to speak--"by default." However, on her good days, when she could teach the way she preferred, then she felt satisfied:

As long as I devise things...as long as I'm not in the picture too much, if I set up the dominoes and then see them go, which is how my classroom usually works, then I'm very satisfied. (Bio 3:15)

In a related way, this questioning of her role was manifested in her changing attitudes about students and about teaching them. As she said, "the way I teach now is so different from how I taught even three years ago" (Obs Int 3:1). While this difference related to Molly's incorporation of activity-based classes, it related even more to some students' responses to the demands of the activity-based approach and to her implementation of it. As Molly saw it, the approach

... has high appeal to many kids. They get to talk to each other, do different kinds of things--record, listen, draw, play games. (Bio 3:11)

| *Our courses are "guts"--easy courses. Anything but think and work. (Epilogue: 4/12/96)*

However, the approach also carried certain demands, namely, the call for students to assume increased responsibility for their learning. For students, this represented a different approach when compared to their other classes.

...I think kids expect that teachers will make them do it. In fact, in my block three class yesterday, I was waiting for them to get quiet and listen. This one kid said, "Why don't you just yell?" I said, "I'm not a yeller. I'm sorry. I can't do that." But that is the perception of what teachers do. Kids have it. That's what they expect. That's what they want. That's what they respond to. (Obs Int 3:5)

| *But I do have my control strategies. They're OK usually. (Epilogue: 4/12/96)*

In Molly's classes, some students resisted taking on this responsibility.

| *Students not only resisted the responsibility inherent in activity-based classes, but also to being in school generally, to being where they don't want to be. (Epilogue: 4/12/96)*

The change for Molly was that she no longer felt the obligation of "trying to make them learn, when they really don't want to" (Obs Int 3:1)--nor did she have the



"energy" to do so. Molly's strategy during this semester, as discussed below, was to stress the accountability she expected of students:

I'm going to make clear what the consequences of not doing it are. I can't force, I won't force feed. (Obs Int 3:2)

This stance was consistent with Molly's view of her teacher role. Nonetheless, the increased responsibility thrust upon students by the activity-based classes and Molly's non-directive approach toward students created tension when students did not respond or resisted this approach. In these instances, Molly recognized that such students needed to be pushed or "forced" to participate, yet she did not want to relate to students in such a manner.

I'm sick of the basic adversarial nature of the relationship that I have with kids in a place like this, or in a structure like this. I find it more and more distasteful all the time. (Obs 2:3)

Together, these factors contributed to a situation in which Molly felt extraordinary pressure, and as a result, she questioned aspects of her teaching and the situation itself..

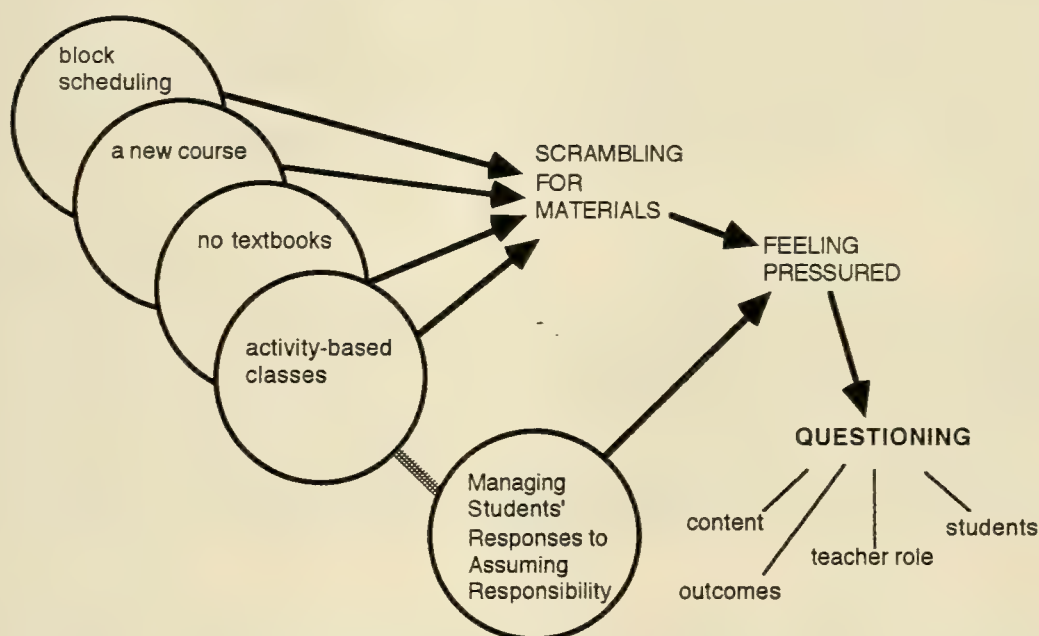


Figure 17: Feeling Pressured

To summarize, this relentless pressure was a significant factor for Molly during the fall semester. The resultant questioning served to highlight the choices Molly made during this time, and by extension, her priorities, principles as a teacher of French in this school--in short, her conception of teaching French. As suggested, the French that Molly taught was intertwined with the content and objectives of the Departmental curriculum, with her use of activity-based classes, with her view of students, with her own perception of her role as teacher, and with her own intended outcomes for instruction.

Given this situation, let us turn to Molly Evans' conception of French.





## ***Conceptions of French***

To organize an examination of Molly's conception of French, I will describe in greater detail her views in each of the following dimensions: teacher role, students, content, activities, outcomes, and context. These dimensions are in a dynamic relationship with one another. This framework posits a teacher's conception of subject matter as a dynamic interaction of six dimensions: context, students, teacher roles, content, activities, and outcomes. The teacher's conception of French is thus a function of these interrelated dimensions.

In concrete terms, this means that a teacher defines the French to be learned as part of a perception of his or her role, students, the types of learning activities, and intended outcomes or results, all set within the possibilities and limitations of the school and classroom, and within relationships with colleagues in the Foreign Language Department.

In general terms, therefore, Molly's conception of the French she taught included her interpretation of the Departmental curriculum and of French, her conceptions of her preferred teacher roles, her perceptions of students' attitudes and abilities, her intended learning outcomes, her choices of learning activities, and her interpretations of Departmental and school expectations. The broad descriptions above suggest an overall conception, but there was much more to Molly's conception of subject matter. Let us now turn to a more detailed examination of each of these dimensions.

## ***Teacher Roles***

Molly's conceptions of her role as a teacher represented the relationships she sought to establish with students. Essentially, these relationships involved two general roles: teacher and representative of the discipline. As a teacher, Molly had a generalized conception of her role and responsibilities that seemed to transcend the subjects that she taught, French and Spanish. This generalized role involved two specific roles: parent, and facilitator. As a representative of the discipline, in contrast, she saw a role that related to the language she was teaching. Specifically, this involved modeling the language and an attitude toward language learning.

## ***Parent Role***

The generalized teacher role, to Molly, resembled that of a parent:

I just had this revelation that I've always known, about how good teaching is like parenting. You know, you really have to nurture, but set limits, and constantly be modeling good behavior. You can't lose it. (Bio 3:2)

Nurturing, setting limits, and modeling good behavior. These three aspects of her teacher role were connected in her mind by the notion of a parenting role, which in turn reflected her view of students as young persons who needed this sort of relationship in this situation.

## ***Nurturing***

"Nurturing" involved demonstrating "care" and "respect" (Obs Int 3:5) for students, showing interest in them, as a means of making the learning experience a "happier one for everybody," and also of possibly triggering students' interest and motivation for the subject.



I know I've mentioned that before, that I want to let the kids know that I care about them as people, because I know that that can...Well, it just makes the whole experience a happier one for everybody--but it also might make a kid who was blowing off my subject maybe think a little bit more about not blowing it off. The personal touch, I think, is inestimable in value. (Curric 1:6)

The nurturing role is not only linked to providing students a positive learning experience, but Molly also saw this as a way to foster in them a kind of positive predisposition toward the language and language study, an option students might possibly consider when they are older.

Nurturing, moreover, had its roots in Molly's own experiences as a parent, which transformed her perception of her students and reinforced the importance of this role in her teaching:

I remember when I first had my daughter and returned to the classroom. I think it made me a better person to realize that everybody is somebody's kid, and you really have to treat them with respect. Sometimes I look at them, and I think, This is not a person yet. This is an egg. You want to not crush it, or scramble it, or mess it up--just move it along. (Obs Int 3:5)

### **Setting Limits**

"Setting limits" involved establishing expectations for students' taking responsibility and being accountable for their work. If they were not able to show responsibility and accountability, students then incurred the consequences.

I see responsibility on here [transcript summary]. I think that's what helped me make the decision not to intervene. They know what they're supposed to do. See, this is a dilemma: do you give them the rope and let them hang themselves? We all know that kids make bad decisions. In this instance, I came down on the side of...Yes, let them hang themselves. If they don't do it, whose problem is it, really? We're supposed to teach responsibility. If they screw up, well, maybe they'll learn something. (Curric 1:9)

*"If they screw up, maybe they'll learn something." I really think that's true, but we have to make it very unpleasant for them to screw up the first time, in a little way. At least that's how I'm feeling this year, this semester. Part of the reason is that I also had a conference with my own daughter's teachers, and they told me that she was socializing in class, and wasn't getting her work done. I said, "Well she rides with me every day. Give her a detention. Hold her accountable. Nail her." So...guess what, mom? That's what I should be doing more of. It's very interesting to hold up that mirror and see...as a parent. (Epilogue: 4/12/96)*

### **Modeling good behavior**

"Modeling good behavior" involved Molly's efforts "to be a good model of adult behavior" (Bio 2:1). Accepting responsibility, being accountable, and accepting the consequences of one's actions were part of the adult behavior that Molly expected from students, particularly in response to activity-based classes. Her role was to manage these expectations with students in an adult manner, through "reminders" to students of these expectations, but not through demands. As she put it:

I'm going to make clear what the consequences of not doing it are. I can't force, I won't force feed. (Curric 3:3)

Her refusal to force feed, to insist that students do the work, to be "directive and forceful and authoritarian" (Curric 3:2) stemmed from a conviction regarding her proper role as a teacher. This meant being even-handed, consistent, clear, and calm. It meant not "losing it," that is, getting upset and reacting to students in a negative way, like being "sarcastic" (Curric 1:6).





### ***Facilitating***

In addition to the parenting dimensions, Molly saw her teacher role as a facilitator of students' learning. As mentioned earlier, with the passage of time Molly had changed her teaching approach so that she was less the center of attention and of activities and more of an orchestrator of events in the classroom, a pivotal teacher role in the activity-based class.

But since my teaching has become less teacher-centered, it's OK. As long as I devise things...as long as I'm not in the picture too much, if I set up the dominoes and then see them go, which is how my classroom usually works, then I'm very satisfied. (Bio 3:15)

Devising and orchestrating these "dominoes"--students' engagement in the variety of learning tasks in her activity-based class--was central to her conception of what being a teacher was all about. It meant organizing meaningful and involving learning activities, and allowing students the opportunity to work on them in a supportive and enjoyable atmosphere, with the teacher in the background.

### ***Representing the discipline***

Alongside these teacher roles, Molly also saw herself as a representative of the "discipline," in that she was responsible for giving students an "impression" of the language. She wanted this to be a positive impression. She felt a responsibility to "do no harm," to not "turn off" students to the language or to language study.

It became very obvious to me that people have been much more significant than I ever would have assumed in my reaction to a discipline. I probably knew this on a deeper level, because in my teaching, I see myself, even though I'm not a native speaker of either language that I teach, the kids are getting their impressions of this discipline through me. And I really don't want to turn them off, so I'm always trying to make it...I'm trying to do what teachers always do, or conscientious teachers always do, which is to meet everybody's needs in every way, and make them the happiest possible learners. You know, provide the challenge, but make it doable. Provide the support, but a little pinch of stress to keep them on their toes. Just trying to...I think it's partly why I try to be the perfect teacher. (Bio 2:1)

Here, Molly associated the impressions of the discipline with teaching, more precisely, with the nature of the learning experiences she provides the students. By her facilitating a successful learning experience, students will have a positive impression of the discipline.

More to the point, the impression that Molly sought to convey to students was presented in terms of what was to be avoided, namely, negative attitudes toward or rejection of the discipline. In specifying her role here, she described the features of the learning experience and of her relationship to students that would result in "the happiest possible learners." In other words, she defined her role as representative of the discipline in terms of the learning experience, as opposed to the kind of language she needed to present in order to achieve a happy learner. Indeed, she was quite specific to this end:

Well, it's probably obvious by what I've said, but I do want the experience that my students have in my classroom to be pleasant. Always. Because even if they...I can't take them very far with the language, I feel like physicians--Do no harm. Some day they might want to come back to this, because they are so young. (Bio 2:4)

Another way of putting this distinction is to position it within the two larger roles: teacher and teacher of French. In the former role, Molly addressed general pedagogical and relational issues, while through the latter she dealt specifically with



the subject matter. When asked about this distinction, Molly described it in terms of a conflict that she felt, something that she struggled with.

...the difference between teaching French and teacher, the first thing that popped into my mind was that sometimes the subject matter is completely irrelevant. It's just a tiny slice of pie on the chart, at this level, anyway. I kind of feel bad about that. I feel like it should be more. In France, I'm sure it is. Maybe at higher levels, it is. It's something that I continue to wrestle with: where is the major emphasis? Is it the subject? Is it something else? I can't turn them into language geniuses, but I can turn them off, very easily. I can just... I don't know, if I'm doing my job right, maybe they should be language geniuses. It's a real issue for me. (Curric 1:8)

This conflict (illustrated in the diagram below) seemed to be one of role, and of emphasis. Where should Molly be placing her emphasis: on helping students become "language geniuses" by being a French teacher, or on not "turning them off" by being a teacher? Put another way, to what extent should she emphasize language learning outcomes or the overall learning experience?

*Right on. That is so true. I still feel that 60 percent of my efforts should go into "overall learning experience." 60 to 70 percent. Well, they were so related. And my own experience as a learner stands out so clearly. I remember teachers who were nice human beings and I worked for them, and I remember people where I sat in class and did nothing, and was allowed to do that, and learned nothing. Also, I felt lukewarm. I didn't like it, didn't dislike it, but I didn't like it either. I didn't care, because the teacher, just the way the teacher was, made such a difference for me. Then, at the university level, my experience with German, and then that first French teacher that I had at the university just... "Good-bye. I am out of here. I can't stand it."*

*This may be an impossible goal. This may be why teachers burn out, because you're trying to make it so good for everybody all the time. But if you didn't try, what are you doing teaching? (Epilogue: 4/12/96)*

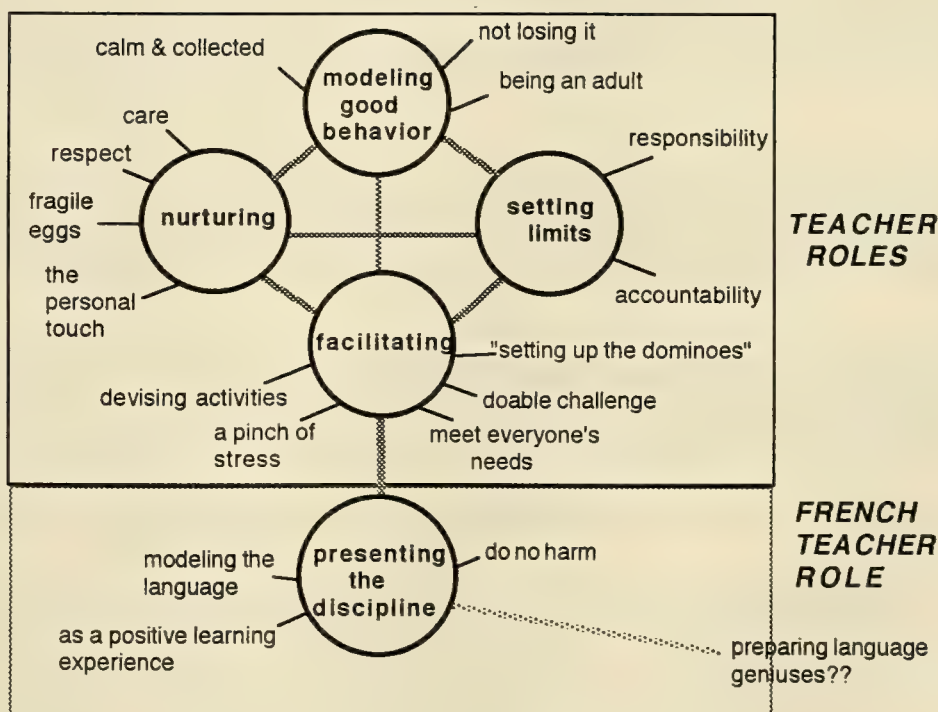


Figure 18: Teacher Roles





Molly talked about the importance to "do no harm" (Bio 2:3), a central feature of her thinking about pedagogy and her view of possible outcomes for many of her students, especially those who were not motivated or who did not plan to continue. This aim, she recognized, did not really have much to do with learning French, or with achievement in French. Given this aim, she wondered whether the subject matter was really relevant. This was a major influence in Molly's conception of French. It involved students' attitudes, levels, and Molly's expectations for students' success. She seemed caught on the horns of a dilemma: if she was mostly concerned with not turning them off, how could she at the same time push them to achieve?

*These are two side-by-side goals, not mutually exclusive, because many students do want a challenge and to achieve. Well, I think many students do want a challenge, and achievement is a very positive motivator. It has to be an appropriate level of challenge. Well, I can answer the question. If I am concerned with not turning them off, I can make sure that they're not turned off by providing an appropriate challenge. And they'll want more. (Epilogue: 4/12/96)*

In addition to these two general roles, Molly also played another role, albeit not one to her liking. Her conception of general teacher roles, to be precise, sometimes conflicted with her perception that most students in this school expected teachers to be authoritarian, and their expectation that she play this authoritarian role. She described an incident where she had to do this:

One kid just could not make himself work in here yesterday. I sat him down by himself. He could not do it. It was reading a narrative and pulling out pieces of information and putting them in a chart. He couldn't focus. I said, "OK you have to do it for homework." I called his mom, and she said, "Oh yeah. Thank you so much. I'll make sure he does it." He came in today with it not done, because he'd left his materials at school. Too bad. He can't move on until he does it. For him, in that instance, I felt like I had to rub his nose in it. I had to make him do it. We're public servants. We should make them do it. (Curric 1:9)

| Yes. (Epilogue: 4/12/96)

"Public servant" was her way of casting this conception of role, much like a duty that she was expected to fulfill as a teacher in a public school. Molly saw this as enforcing authority for the public good, in a manner of speaking, or as "playing cop" (Bio 2:18).

The authoritarian role also connected with her own experience as a high school student, where she was "motivated by fear" and by her "strictest teachers" (Curric 1:9). Molly had no desire to play this kind of teacher role, despite her experiences and students' expectations.

I know that I was motivated by fear. The teachers for whom I did my best work were the strictest ones. I can't be like that. (Curric 1:9)

In fact, in my block three class yesterday, I was waiting for them to get quiet and listen. This one kid said, "Why don't you just yell?" I said, "I'm not a yeller. I'm sorry. I can't do that." But that is the perception of what teachers do. Kids have it. That's what they expect. That's what they want. That's what they respond to. Looking back on my own experience as a high school kid--I know I've mentioned this before, too--I did my best work for people who were very demanding, and mean, because fear was my motive. (Curric 3:4)



*I don't really think that's what they want, but it is unfortunately how they've been treated. (Epilogue: 4/12/96)*

Again, on a more fundamental level, Molly questioned whether her temperament matched such a teacher role, since she did not possess the characteristics of such teachers. She did not see herself as extroverted, entertaining, forceful, strict, or intimidating.

I feel that temperamentally, I am really unsuited to this profession. (Jrnl: 10/12/94)

I'm an introvert. I'm shy. I don't like to make people do things that they don't want to do. I'm not really an entertainer. I'm not funny. (Bio 3:15)

At the same time, Molly's abdication of the authoritarian role also resulted from her perception that some students were simply not interested in learning French or Spanish, regardless of what she did. Molly had accepted that she could not "make them learn, when they really don't want to" (Curric 3:2). As she saw it, no amount of coercion on her part could change such student attitudes; therefore, it was not worth expending her energy on such a fruitless venture.

I really have to try to be honest with me, about why. One reason is I have less energy now than I used to, and I really have to pick my battles. Secondly, even though I wouldn't want to write off a kid--I wouldn't want anybody to write off my kid--but hey... I'm only going to spit in the wind so much, before I quit. It's stupid to waste your energy. Some of the kids I have, especially in Spanish, aren't going to go anywhere with it. So, why should I get myself all worked up and get negative, and have them hate me, and have me hate my job, for nothing. (Obs Int 3:2)

*Last year's classes kind of reflected the old stereotype that the bright kids take French. I did have some very good students in Spanish, a number of them, but I had big classes. The critical mass was average to a little below, and very young kids. This year, especially the section that I have this spring, is much better. (Epilogue: 4/12/96)*

These roles came into play, therefore, as a result of students' expectations. The relationship between these roles and students' expectations created a sort of tension, or a need on Molly's part, to strike an appropriate balance.

To summarize, Molly's concepts of role were essentially twofold: as teacher and as representative of the language. The generalized teacher involved a parenting role, which entailed additional roles of nurturing, modeling adult behavior, and setting limits, as well as a facilitating role. At the same time, however, Molly felt obliged to play an authoritarian role, namely to enforce rules, although this was not to her liking. Her role as teacher representing the language to the students was to enhance students' positive attitudes about the language and about the language learning experience, although she wondered whether her role ought also to be fostering student performance in the language.

## **Students**

Molly's conception of students closely paralleled her conception of teacher roles. Accordingly, these conceptions related to her general perceptions of students of this age and this school, and also their attitudes and performance in the subject matter and in the activities.

Students of this age, in Molly's view, were in the process of becoming--not yet persons. They were fragile eggs who needed respect, not to be crushed, scrambled





or messed up (Obs Int 3:5). They needed "good models of adult behavior," "nurturing," and "limits" (Bio 3:2)--all roles that presumed students as not fully formed or developed. As she put it simply, "they are kids" (Bio 3:14).

Along these lines, Molly saw the students as involved in many and diverse interests. Students wanted her to share these interests, or at least show an interest in them:

...the kids seem to want us to be totally involved with them. They like to linger and to talk about personal stuff. They want us to come to their games. I have heard kids say that they want us to be more visible in the halls, so that kids won't shove and use such bad language. They really want us to be constantly present, and authoritarian. That's one of the things they want. I think they just want us to be interested in them. (Curric 2:1)

*I think that's another thing that's so draining. We're always on. They're so needy. You're always having to be there for them. You can't go someplace and shut the door. Teachers in that building are always on in ways that you don't really want to be. Like they'll say something to another student, and you know that you're supposed to hear it and react, express concern. Or they'll just be swearing a lot, you know. You can't pretend that you didn't hear it. It's so unpleasant to always be dealing with that kind of thing. (Epilogue: 4/12/96)*

However, students' interests did not necessarily correspond to Molly's interests, which she readily acknowledged:

Their [soccer] game means more to them way more than my class means to them. I only care about the thing [language] that they don't care about. It's kind of weird. (Curric 2:2)

I did show up at one girls' soccer game, because my daughter was playing at the half-time. The kids thought I was there to see them, and I didn't disabuse them of that notion. Well, actually I did, later. They're so pleased when they see us. It's really quite touching. It makes me think that the kind of teacher that these kids need is people who can be much more involved with them, people who don't have lives of their own. (Curric 2:1)

This disparity seemed to reflect, in part, Molly's ambivalence about becoming involved in students' interests. Molly realized that students' worlds and interests were not hers, yet she also recognized how important her relationship was with them.

...I think a big part of how I think about my job is my relationship with the kids, and trying to appreciate them, and enjoy them as people. I kind of feel sorry for people who don't work with kids. It might not be quite as much fun. At least I'm saying that today. I also can say in the same breath, I don't know how many more years I can deal with teenagers. But they can be outrageously funny, and they are kids. They're very innocent, and a lot of fun to work with. (Bio 3:14)

Thus, Molly saw students as needing nurturing, limits, and models of adult behavior, yet also as needing a show of interest in them and their lives.

*This is so true. I think what I'm doing here a little bit is just elaborating. And also, not to minimize the importance of what I was hired to do, to open some doors for them. Show them... New things for many of them is the whole idea of travel, the world out there. (Epilogue: 4/12/96)*

As for performance in the subject matter, Molly made a distinction between students who had an aptitude or ability with language, and those who did not have it. For the most part, this distinction was between students who went on to the Intermediate Level, as opposed to those who did not, i.e. those who achieved two years of language study and stopped, the Novices.



The big filter, I think, is between the Novice and Intermediate Levels. That's where the kids will filter out. The kids who really are not interested, or capable. (Curric 2:10)

*My spring Intermediate French class has some people that must have just squeaked by the Oral Proficiency Interview. I wouldn't say that they're that capable. They're interested in being French speakers, but they're not real interested in working to achieve that. So the filter has got some big holes in it. I'm glad that they continued with French. They're welcome in my class, but I was wrong about envisioning this magic filter. (Epilogue: 4/12/96)*

Those who continued as Intermediates included most of the "good students," even the "best and the brightest" (Curric 2:10) in the school. These students were either college-bound or very interested and capable in language.

Even at the Intermediate level, however, Molly still drew this distinction among students. In commenting on the range of student levels during a customs simulation activity, she put it squarely:

Some of that range is due to [students'] preparation, and a lot is just...you know, you either have it or you don't. (Obs Int 1:5)

In addition to students' performance and capacities in the language, Molly drew distinctions between those students who were willing to assume the responsibility needed to make the activity-based approach work, and those who were not. The underlying principles of this approach were in fact based on a model of good adult behavior:

They've been given responsibilities, and asked to make choices, and this is good training, to know how to make a choice, and know how to justify a choice, and how to live with the choices. (Curric 3:15)

In a way, the activity-based class served as a sort of litmus test of students' suitability for this passage to adulthood. Even though she recognized that students needed nurturing as fragile kids, she also expected them to behave as adults by engaging in the activity-based classes.

*I'm definitely coercive in this respect, because I award participation credit, with my dot-matrix for being on task, and also credit for producing the work. Even if it's a game, they have to show me that they've played the game. It's figured into their grade the same way that a homework assignment would be. It's kind of blatant: "You will play this game. You will have fun." Some kids just want to learn and they find the activities appealing, but others really need the hammer. They wouldn't do it unless they had to, even if it's something that I considered fun. (Epilogue: 4/12/96)*





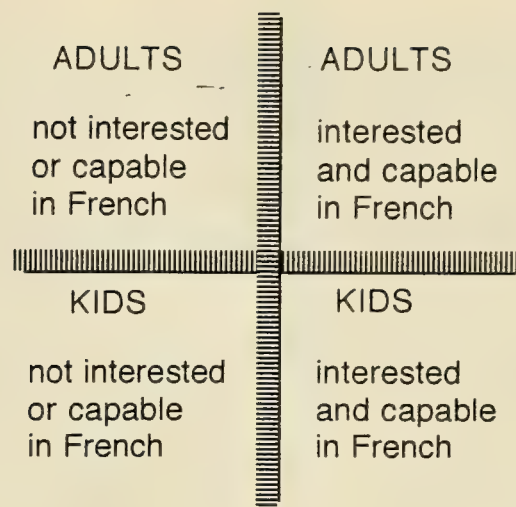


Figure 19: View of Students

As the diagram indicates, Molly's viewed students in two essential planes: the degree of maturity they showed, and the degree of their capability and interest in French. Depending on the student and the situation, she responded with the concomitant teacher role--up to a point. For example, although she recognized that many students, as kids, were unable or unwilling to assume the adult responsibility required by the activity-based class and her facilitator role, she was unwilling to play the authoritarian role of enforcing participation--*but I did. I encourage and point out consequences*. For students who accepted her facilitator role and the adult responsibilities, Molly felt a sense of satisfaction.

### ***Conceptions of Content, Activities, and Outcomes***

Conceptions of teacher roles and of students flowed from Molly's conceptions of what was to be learned, how it was learned, and the intended results--content, activities, and outcomes--which were in turn defined by Molly's conceptions of teacher roles and students. Again, the relationships between and among these varied conceptions constituted Molly's overall conception of subject matter. The relationships were the defining factors, it bears repeating. In this section, I will describe Molly's conceptions of content, activities, and outcomes

### ***Conceptions of Content***

As noted, Molly's concept of materials included both lesson content and learning activities for the lesson. Block scheduling and activity-based classes meant more activities for each lesson, and the changes in curriculum and class levels meant new content or combinations of content. Molly's "scrambling for materials" thus meant decisions about both content and activities.

Content, as defined here, is that which students are to learn. Content, as Molly defined it, involved French and French usage, and it also involved other areas, such as the development of certain attitudes toward the language and toward language study.



### ***Language Content***

Language content, for Molly, was closely linked to the curriculum established by the Department. Molly struggled with putting together a new course for the Intermediate French Level, including specification of language content and of learning activities, which she referred to as 'scrambling for materials.' Because of the reconfiguration, she was under increased pressure to put together both content and activities on a day-to-day basis--planning the course as she was teaching it--creating the situation of constantly scrambling for materials.

As described, the Thematic Units for the Intermediate Level consisted of a range of topic areas, classified as Survival and Expanded to reflect Intermediate Low or Mid proficiency levels, respectively. Survival involved carrying out role plays in basic traveling transactions, like securing lodging in a hotel, whereas Expanded involved doing the same transaction but with a "complication" (Curric 1:13) thrown in to make the role play more challenging. The Thematic Units were language-generic; the topics applied to both French and Spanish. To reiterate, these topic areas did not include vocabulary lists, lists of grammar points, or lists of communicative expressions or functions, or any other specifications of language items. As described, each teacher had to define the specific content items for each of the topic areas, with the expectation that they would all cover the same material. Teachers thus had great leeway in deciding on language content--and great responsibility.

Molly was of two minds about the autonomy that teachers were accorded. On the one hand, she liked it:

I really like having the autonomy to do what I do. As long as I reach the goal at the end, I can do when, and how, and what I want. (Obs 2: 2)

On the other hand, she recognized a disadvantage. Even though teachers enjoyed great autonomy, they also had to shoulder a significant responsibility. As she put it:

Everybody has the option to do it their way, which is nice. But it can be a minus, too. Sometimes the task of planning, which is so overwhelming, is unbelievable. (Obs 2: 2)

The responsibility, in Molly's eyes, very much involved deciding on content, and she felt the pressure of knowing what to present to students. She felt the need to know.

Since we create the stuff, what if I don't think of everything? (Curr 3: 1)

In this comment Molly named the responsibility for specifying content as both collective and individual. There was the Departmental expectation that teachers were on their own ("we create the stuff"), yet the consequences were ultimately borne by the individual teacher (what if I don't think of everything?). Although she did see that this consequence was logical, it was quite daunting. Molly also questioned whether the collective minds of the Department had thought of everything, since "Our curriculum is just kind of dreamed up out of our own heads--both the curriculum and also a unit plan" (Curr 3: 1).

Tellingly, she wondered whether there was not another solution, such as a good textbook.

So there may be some serious omissions in what's being covered. ... Omissions of other things, I don't know. Maybe a good, up-to-date text would have vocabulary, some grammar, and maybe a cultural component, and have this all really skillfully interwoven, and maybe we're just blasting right past the cultural component, or something. (Curr 3: 1)





*Well, I don't think textbooks are going to happen in our Department in this millennium, if ever. I haven't even really seriously looked at one, as if I were going to choose one, for a long time. Teaching thematically really does make a lot of sense to me. It sure would make life easier to not have to think, "OK, what am I going to do?" Every day. "Tellingly," because I must have been saying, "Please somebody, throw me a life raft. Give me a text." Jackie and I do a lot of venting of this type. We've all taught with texts. (Epilogue: 4/12/96)*

Molly's question about the existence of a "good up-to-date text" also related to the scope and availability of resource books and materials for French in the Department. In her estimation, there simply weren't enough of such materials on hand for her reference or use. This situation, coupled with the official Departmental policy of not using textbooks, added to the pressure Molly felt. Instead of textbooks, teachers relied on materials they accumulated through teaching certain courses and topic areas, or as Molly put it, their "stuff"--a binder or file of handouts and activities. Because Intermediate French was a new course in the Department, Molly did not have all the stuff that she could rely on throughout. Defining language content for Molly in this French course thus represented a particular challenge.

There were, however, guidelines that Molly used to define the content for the Intermediate French course. These included the Departmental emphases on proficiency, grammar, situations, vocabulary, and Survival topics. Added to these were Molly's own guidelines, which included emphasis on students' describing their own cultural traditions, the concept of a fictional trip as an organizing vehicle for the Thematic Units, and her presentation of the discipline through her own use of French in class and with the students.

Molly's concept of content is represented in the diagram below. At the center was the driving force, the Thematic Unit, which contained certain communicative situations or transactions, and vocabulary. Alongside this central concept, Molly used other parallel concepts of content: grammar, proficiency skills, a generalized concept of "working in the language," her own use of the language, and topics related to U.S. culture.

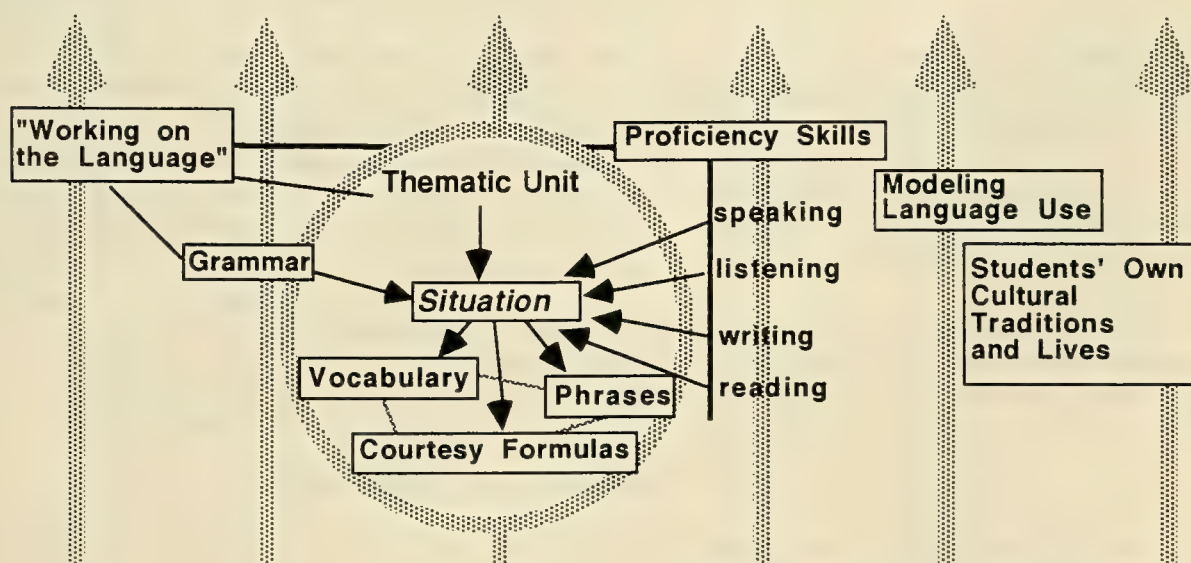


Figure 20: Language Content Tracks



This diagram portrays the interaction of these concepts of language content in Molly's unit plans. The vertical arrows represent parallel tracks, each representing a content area: Working on the Language, Grammar, Thematic Units, Proficiency Skill Areas, Molly's modeling of French use in class and with students, and students' talking about their own cultural traditions.

### **Situation**

The overall organizing concept that Molly used was the Thematic Unit, which generally included some kind of "Situation", or instance where the language was used to communicate. Situations usually consisted of role plays or simulations, where students were to use the language to accomplish some task, such as going through customs as part of the Travel Thematic Unit, or dealing with arrangements for lodging in the Hotel Unit. The situations were intended to be slices of "reality" (Obs 2:17), namely, those that students would really encounter should they travel to France. The importance of "relevant" situations and the language in them was a critical feature.

In addition, Molly considered "complications" in these situations, a particular set of circumstances that represented both "reality" and "more challenging material" for the more advanced students in class. For example, Molly described a complication for the Hotel Unit:

They walk in, they're told that the hotel is full, and they get asked if they would like the person to call another hotel for them, or call a bed and breakfast for them, and how to react if that offer is made, and how to initiate if the offer is not made. (Obs 2:21)

### **Vocabulary**

The "vocabulary" was derived directly from the Situation, and in Molly's conception, is closely linked to "phrases" and "courtesy formulas." Courtesy, in her view, meant being "smooth and polite"--using "*Monsieur, Madame*" and the appropriate use of *tu/vous*. Vocabulary thus consisted of words, expressions or full sentences taken from the exchanges or dialogues of the Situations, which together constitute "phrases you need to get through the situation" (Obs 2:18).

The Situation with its derived Vocabulary was the heart of the language content. With no textbook, much teacher autonomy, and Situations that called for everyday, communicative language, Molly had to assume the responsibility of defining language content that was real, or authentic. Not only did it need to be real, it needed to be relevant or meaningful to students. Molly felt obliged to be able to justify the relevance of language content. Her conception of meaningfulness came from her own orientation to the language, and also from her perception of students' views. As she put it:

What do I like to do? What I think what kids will get: that's what I like to do. What they will enjoy and actually add to their repertoire. ... What I think that they will understand, and see the application for. ... what they will perceive as being helpful to them to become better speakers of this language. (Bio 3:11)

| *They are not into stories or history. (Epilogue: 4/12/96)*

Language content thus was a function of Molly's perception of students' abilities, enjoyment, and their thoughts about what they need to advance in the language.





This, however, was tempered by Molly's own sense of what students needed to know, a prerogative that she did exercise by telling students that "you just have to know this" (Curric 3:24). The point here is that definitions of language content reflected Molly's perceptions of students, and that students had a role in determining language content in order to "talk about their own stuff" (Bio 2:3), *i.e.* "lives."

### **Grammar**

"Grammar" consisted of those structural elements that Molly was expected to include in the Intermediate course as a whole, as well as those that she thought students needed. For the Intermediate Level, the only grammar points specified were "past tense" and "future," but Molly was very attentive to verb tenses during this course, particularly the present, imperfect, future, *futur proche* and *passé composé* tenses.

These tenses represented Departmental expectations for the Intermediate Level, yet these and other grammar points were not named as part of the Situations. Rather, they were presented only "when they come up as part of the theme" (Bio 2:16). Some Situations, in Molly's view, lent themselves to certain grammar points, like the *futur proche* in the Travel Unit, where students could state what they were "going to" accomplish. Even so, because there was not a list of specific grammatical items, Molly felt that she somehow had to "plant" (Curric 2:12) "shoehorn in (Obs 1:11)," or otherwise "invent something" (Bio 3:1) that connected the grammar point to the Situation. In the Hotel Unit, for example, she planned on asking students to recount their experiences in the situations by using the past tense. The byword in incorporating grammar in this manner was "meaningful"--showing students the relevance of the grammar point in question. As Molly put it:

If I can't justify it to the kids, I shouldn't be teaching it. ... That's part of making sure that everything is meaningful, at least a little bit. (Curric 3:24)

Grammar was somewhat of an ambiguous concept in the Departmental curriculum. It did not fit in easily with the proficiency-based Thematic Units, yet it was recognized both by the Department and by Molly as an essential component. For Molly, the ambiguity came from her concept of language and that of meaningfulness, which at times seemed incompatible. As she said,

Sometimes, I feel like we really are jumping through some hoops to try make everything meaningful. Language is such a funny thing to try to teach, because there's just so much to it.

You have to understand the pieces so that you have something to synthesize. (Curric 3:24)

This statement shows that Molly recognized the importance of grammar, namely that students need to be able to know how to put the pieces of language together. At the same time, she admitted to the difficulty of making these pieces meaningful, in the sense that the grammar point be always tied to the communicative exchange in a situation.

Molly's solution was somewhat of a two-pronged approach to grammar: "mechanical" and "meaningful." Mechanical was essentially a structured manipulation of the pieces of the grammar outside a meaningful context, such as a written exercise from a grammar text on the conjugation of the future tense. Meaningful was an application of the pieces to a relevant communicative purpose, "some real way to use it" (Curric 2:13), such as students' making predictions about their lives at future dates in time like the years 2000, or 2020--an activity Molly included in the Travel Unit.





### ***Proficiency Skills***

Speaking, Listening, Reading, and Writing--the proficiency skills--were uses of the language that were also incorporated into the unit plan through the choice and orchestration of learning activities. Like the Grammar, these skills were an ongoing track that was constantly in play, regardless of the Thematic Unit being taught. However, according to Molly, the Departmental emphasis was clearly on the spoken language: "We agree that speaking and listening are much more important" (Bio 2:18). Again, in the description of the Thematic Units, there was no specific mention of proficiency skills per se, although they did appear in the overall goals and objectives listed for language study in the Department. In Molly's conception, it appeared that these skills were modes of interaction or involvement with the language, and her tendency was to think of them in terms of learning activities.

### ***Working in the language***

An additional parallel track was a concept that Molly referred to as "the ongoing nature of language, just working in the language" (Obs 2:16). This seemed to consist of communicative interactions to apply or practice, in meaningful ways, the language content from Thematic Units, grammar, or other sources. For example, she had students use an Advent Calendar to translate an ongoing story, or play the Dreidle game during Hanukkah week, or participate in an open-ended conversation at the outset of class.

These interactions seemed to be of three kinds: 1) large group activities facilitated in French by Molly, such as the initial Commentary activity, where students engaged in free conversation with each other and with Molly; 2) one-on-one interactions with Molly, where she either engaged individuals or small groups of students in French on various topics, such as her queries of groups' alibis regarding a mishap with the Advent calendar; 3) students working with each other on tasks in French, such as practicing role plays for the Hotel situations, or asking and answering questions about their future predictions for the same Unit. The latter interaction, as noted above, depended on students to carry the ball and work in French, but Molly had noticed their tendency toward "interacting with each other in English about the target language" (Curric 3:1). Working in the language was thus a concept of language use that Molly portrayed through her expectations of activities, as well as her own use of the language.

### ***A model of using the language***

Molly's own use of French in class and her interactions with the students in the language was a manifestation of using French; she saw herself as representing a model of using the language. Molly, as noted, did consider "representing the discipline" as one of her teacher roles. This concept was somewhat distinct from simply using French to conduct class, for it involved Molly's portrayal of her relationship with the language, how she has integrated French into her way of being.

In describing her accent in Spanish in a response to observing a student teacher with native-like Spanish in her Novice Spanish class, Molly reflected on her own use of Spanish and what she wanted to convey to students:

It makes me realize that I sound more "American" on purpose. I don't want to scare [students], and I want them to realize that they can do what I do if they want to. (Journal 10/12/94)





By modeling such a relationship with the language, Molly showed students that it was accessible to them, and that sounding American was all right. Notice, too, the importance of not frightening students by her own use of the language, of not turning them off or intimidating them. As she described the student teacher's effect: "He's blowing my Novices out of the water!" (Journal 10/12/94).

In her Intermediate French class, she spoke fluently on all topics that occurred during the course of a lesson, showing an ease and confidence in self-expression, and an ability to find other words when a particular word was not there, as well as a comfort with not knowing. Even though Molly was very conscious that her language was not "authentic", at the same time, she conveyed a model of what it meant to know and use French in a communicative manner. To a great extent, Molly was demonstrating a way of integrating French into one's persona, and that this could be a positive experience.

### ***Students' own cultural traditions***

An additional conception of language content involved students' talking in French about "their own cultural traditions" (Obs 1:9), *their own lives*. The Solstice, Advent Calendar, Hanukkah and the Dreidle game, for example, were not part of the Thematic Units or the Situations, but were representative of this conception. Holiday traditions seemed to be a primary source of such topics. In regards to winter holidays, for example, Molly was very conscious of including a range of differing holiday traditions from the U.S., such as Christmas, the Solstice, Hanukkah, and Kwaanza.

Language content, to summarize, was primarily a representation of the curriculum as Molly understood and interpreted it, along with her own conceptions of language and of students' needs. Language content, therefore, needed to be real, meaningful, justifiable, and to reflect students' own cultural traditions and their "own stuff." Also, Molly was the source of the language content; she decided what material to put before the students.

### ***Non-Language Content***

This content area deals primarily with development of attitudes. These attitudes are derived from the Department, and from Molly's own values regarding language study in this context.

In the Departmental summary of language learning goals, those involving attitudes were described in this way:

- to develop global awareness and an appreciation of cultural differences...
- to enhance...appreciation of the target language...
- to develop a positive self-image as language learners, a feeling of pride in their achievements, and an appreciation for the achievements of others...
- to develop learning skills and a sense of responsibility for their own learning...
- to develop awareness of language study's value for its own sake, for its role in other disciplines and as a marketable skill...
- to develop critical thinking and creativity...
- to continue their study of languages and/or support and appreciate the efforts of others in their study. (Foreign Language Department Goals: Fall 94)



As is evident from the terminology in these statements, the overall thrust of these goals was "cognitive and affective development" (ibid.). The development of positive attitudes toward the language, cultural differences, oneself and others, towards language study and of its relevance to other disciplines, even professions was a critical emphasis in the Department. In addition, there was the emphasis on developing learning skills and "a sense of responsibility" for one's learning.

Molly evinced the importance of development of positive attitudes toward French and toward the study of French. As noted already, students' enjoyment of the language content was an important criterion that Molly used in defining what to teach. At the same time, Molly's conception of development of positive attitudes seemed to be construed as elimination or minimization of negative attitudes. Her maxims of "Do no harm" and "Don't turn them off" reflected this perception. So, Molly seemed to have two conceptions in play: to enhance enjoyment, and to avoid rejection. The singular importance of attitude development for Molly is addressed later in the discussion of Outcomes.

### ***Conceptions of Activities***

The above conceptions of content were closely linked to Molly's concepts of activities. This section outlines Molly's activity-based approach, her rationale for using it, and the types of activities she employed.

The activity-based class consisted of an initial activity or two that Molly conducted with the entire class, followed by a series of activities that students carried out on their own or in small groups. All activities were written on a large piece of paper posted on the blackboard--a list referred to as the "menu of activities." Students were to choose activities and carry them out during class, making judicious use of the time available to them. Depending on the class, Molly might re-assemble students in the large group for an activity or two to end the period. For the most part, however, the students were on their own, working on their choices from the menu of activities, with Molly circulating from group to group, monitoring their progress.

With the changeover to a full-fledged activity-based approach and the doubled class period, Molly had given herself an additional challenge: devising enough learning activities to fill the additional time, as well as to address the content.

This challenge, however, invigorated her. Even though she did have concerns about omission of important content because everything was "invented," Molly enjoyed devising learning activities.

It's an interesting way of thinking about using a block of time. That's, for me, the new twist that keeps this from being boring. (Curr 3: 21)

In fact, she specified this interest in two of her three teaching goals that she articulated to the Department Head for the school year: "to further develop activities and materials to teach multilevel, block classes," and "to develop strategies for keeping students on task in an activity-based class and make them accountable for how they use their time" (Evaluation Plan: 9/26/94).





### ***Rationale***

There are a number of reasons underlying Molly's use of the activity-based approach. First of all, it had Departmental approval. Second, it appealed to students. Third, the approach allowed Molly to put into practice a number of fundamental learning principles that she valued highly. Furthermore, it reflected her preferred facilitator role as a teacher in this public school setting.

First, Molly described the use of the activity-based approach as "an individual decision which has Departmental support" (Curric 3: 1), namely, an individual decision that other teachers made at the same time which became the Departmental policy. She herself had been experimenting with it the previous year, and she was instrumental in bringing it to the Department as a viable pedagogical option. It represented a pronounced shift from "teacher-centered" classes that were the norm in other subjects in the school, which featured the teacher before the whole class, which students referred to as "lecture" classes (Curric 3: 15). With the changeover to block scheduling and the doubled class period, adopting an activity-based approach seemed a viable alternative, to the point where it had now become "Department modus operandi" (Curric 3: 1).

Another dimension of Departmental approval involved the public image of the Department as educationally "innovative" (Obs 1:12). The activity-based approach was not teacher-centered, lecture-based; instead, it gave responsibility to the students and allowed them to direct their own learning to a significant degree. This was the kind of image that the Department wanted to convey to the rest of the school and beyond, through presentations of their language program at regional and national conferences. Molly's choice and implementation of the activity-based approach thus received support and approval from the Department, and the Department Head.

Second, students reacted favorably to the approach.

Last year was my first year to try it. I tried it in French Two, which I had three sections of, with a couple of units. I just saw how readily the kids responded, and also at the same time, the school was full of talk about what was going to happen with block scheduling. The reaction among kids was so negative that they didn't want to be in the same place for that long of a time, and they didn't want to be lectured at. So...it seemed like a natural combination to say, "Well you do something over there, now you have to go over there and do something." (Obs 2: 17)

Kids do not like to be lectured at. In fact, I think they're confused about what a lecture actually even is. They just don't like teacher-directed activities. (Curr 3: 15)

Students' reactions, in Molly's perception, seemed to be motivated by the appeal of the activities, as well as by the absence of teacher lectures.

Third, this approach also reflected values and principles that Molly supported, in terms of students, activities, and teacher role. To wit:

### ***Students***

- The focus is on what they do. They should be doing, not just sitting and watching the clock. (Obs 1:17)



- ... an ongoing thing that I try to be aware of all the time is to do different things, and also to let the kids take the lead, whenever possible, because I think the results will be better. (Curr 3:14)
- ... they are able to, or they have to work with somebody else, which means that they have to speak, or at least...there are more modalities involved. If they're sitting taking notes, they're listening and writing. They're working with a partner. They're more engaged as creators. They're responsible for each other. (Obs 1:16)
- ... student accountability and student responsibility. If they have a menu of things to do, and they decide that they're going to spend their time talking about the soccer game, or whatever. Tough. I'll remind them once or twice, but I'm not going to rub their nose in it. (Bio 3:9)
- ... they know what they're supposed to do. (Curr 1:9)

### *Activities*

- The different activities can appeal to their strengths in some way. (Obs 1:16)
- It makes the time go faster. (Obs 1:16)
- Things flow smoothly. (Obs 1:17)
- ...to do different things... (Curr 3:14)
- I want it to be fun. I want it to be doable. I want it to be challenging. I want it to be varied. I want it to explore all modalities. (Obs 2:22)
- if it's just as effective when it's fun as when it's not fun, obviously our decision is easy. (Obs 1:17)
- My tendency is to think in terms of: What would be fun? Activities. That's where I really try to put in something for everybody. (Curr 2: 17)
- As much as possible, I like the activities to be something that they can document, prove that they have done. (Obs 2:15)

### *Teacher Role*

- I'm free to just float. My role is really different. Some days I feel like there's hardly anything for me to do. Sometimes I build in where an activity is to come and chat with me, but that's something I don't want to do too much of; because then I'm kind of stuck. I'm also free to deal with behavior, which helps. Things flow smoothly. I can observe my own students in a way that I couldn't before. I can give help more easily. I can see individual papers. I can see work in progress. (Obs 1:17)
- As long as I devise things...as long as I'm not in the picture too much, if I set up the dominoes and then see them go, which is how my classroom usually works, then I'm very satisfied. (Bio 3:15)

Finally, the practices and principles associated with the activity-based approach seemed to support Molly's perception of her role as a teacher. At the heart of the activity-based approach was the notion of students' taking responsibility for their own learning. They were expected to choose activities from the menu, to do them in class, either alone or with others, and to produce something afterwards, something that could be documented.

In order for students to succeed, they had "to do" on their own. In a word, this meant that they had to learn to be responsible. Molly put it succinctly:

They've been given responsibilities, and asked to make choices, and this is good training, to know how to make a choice, and know how to justify a choice, and how to live with the choices. (Curr 3:15)

Because this was what students had to learn, Molly had to play certain roles with them. The roles associated with "modeling good behavior," "setting limits," "facilitating," and with being a "public servant" (described earlier in this chapter) came into play here.





What needs to be stressed is that the activity-based approach fit Molly's perception of the kind of teacher she had chosen to be in the context of this school, as well as the kind of teacher she was expected to be, at least as far as the Department was concerned, and many students, as well. Certain students, however, did not share this expectation.

### ***Types of Activities***

Molly made use of a variety of activities in her classes. The challenge she faced in assembling them related not only to matching them to the language content, but also to logistical considerations, namely, organizing them so that students were able to move through them, singly and/or in groups, with a minimum of confusion or idle time, and with minimum guidance or intervention from Molly.

Such coordination required certain parameters. For example, Molly had to consider the number of work groups in the class as an important factor, especially if there were group tasks that were to be done. She had to provide enough tasks so that groups would not be waiting on other groups to finish at a particular station. In the case of the Intermediate French class, the number of activities was five.

Five is right, because I have five groups. In the back of my mind, I'm thinking that some of these activities are group activities, and when I'm tying up the whole group, there has to be plenty of other stuff for other groups to do. Or, when I'm not tying up the whole group, and the group is split up, there have to be enough activities that a group can split and still have something to do, not just sit around and wait. (Obs 2:14)

Also, Molly had certain activities that she tended to include as a matter of course, such as a listening comprehension activity with tape recorder and headphones, a game of some sort, as well as activities which called for group tasks where students could "interact a lot" (Bio 3:12). Molly also needed to consider the time needed to accomplish the various activities. Moreover, she needed to prepare the materials for each of the activities, which involved handouts of her own creation or photocopied pages from other sources, depending on the Thematic Unit.

These logistical considerations notwithstanding, the types of activities that Molly employed were clearly matched to her concepts of language content. Activities were linked to situations, vocabulary, grammar, proficiency skills, and working on the language. These language content areas overlapped in many instances, yet there seemed to be an overall distinction that could be drawn.

To illustrate, the following section describes activities that Molly employed in a lesson that was part of the Thematic Unit on Customs. Molly's comments on these activities are adjacent to the descriptions.



### I. Calendrier Activity

Here, a student was chosen to lift a square on the date of an Advent calendar to reveal a sentence written in English, one in a series of sentences that together constituted an unfolding story about Timmy Pine. The student read the sentence aloud, and Molly elicited the French translation, which she wrote on a large piece of paper underneath previous sentences. Molly used this activity to point out usage of the passé composé and the imparfait tenses. Students copied the translation into their notebooks.

### II. Simulation: Passport Control/Customs

This activity consisted of a "Au Contrôle de Passeports" and "A La Douane" simulation. Molly played the role of a customs officer and a visitor that of a policeman. In their work groups, students visited both stations (two desks), where they had to submit their handmade passports to be studied and stamped, and answer questions about their travel plans and baggage. While waiting, students went over the exchanges that they had to carry out (from the "Going Through Customs" chapter in Conversation Situations).

Once all groups had completed the simulation, they were involved in the activities on the list, and Molly circulated among the groups while they worked. The activities were divided into three sections on the list: Réaction personnelle à la simulation, Le Futur, Les Jours de Fête (Holidays).

#### 1. Written reaction to the simulation

Afterwards, students wrote briefly on their personal reactions to the simulation, which they handed in to Molly for classwork credit. Students could also begin work on the Menu of Activities for this lesson.

#### 2. Future: Photocopied Exercises

For the Future activities, students were to work in groups. There were three required activities (A, B, C), and one optional (D).

*I chose that because it is a story, the story of Timmy Pine. ... I want them to think about...that if you're telling a story, you're going to see these two tenses, and I wanted them--I didn't give them the translation right away--I really want them to think about it, and they do. A lot of what I ended up writing on the big paper came from them.*

*...by the time we get to number twenty-four, we'll have the story up there. I don't know what, if anything, I'll do with it. Maybe that last crazy week, I'll create a menu where one of the things that they can do, if they want to show me that they've learned something, is to tell me the story. I don't know.*

*...the whole protocol of what you do when you travel is big news to many of these kids. In a way, it really isn't a survival skill, because of course they would be spoken to in English. Some of them have been to France, and they were very quick to point out, "Well! We didn't have to speak French." But they might have to talk to somebody about having gone through customs. They should know words like douane.*

*Preparation and practice. We worked a little bit with that yesterday in class. We had a chance to practice with partners, and then we did two lines, like the contradance thing.*

*I also wanted them to--this is not linguistic, but I wanted them to have the experience, even though when they go through the douane, they will be spoken to in English, if at all. Just to be scrutinized by somebody, and to be questioned, is an interesting experience.*

*I just want to know what they think. I want to know their feelings, and their thoughts. How does it feel? (5)*

*...I want to know if it was scary. I just want to know what they're thinking, because I spend a huge amount of my life thinking about them--what's going to be at their level intellectually, what's going to fit their interest, and how they're responding to what I think they're going to like, or what I have to make them do, or learn--in a general sense. (6)*

*Well, this kinds of hangs together as a progression, all of the future activities do. A and B already were loose ends from the day before. I always think we're going to get more done than we do. ... The tape, and then the idea of doing the brainstorming, were new, but I was hoping people would get to them. Plus, just a logistical thing, you have to make sure you have enough for them to do. (8)*





The first required one (A) was to complete two written exercises photocopied from a French grammar exercise book in which students had to transform sentences into the simple future tense. The second one (B) consisted of students writing out all of the forms of the future tense of eight verbs (avoir, être, aller, faire, prendre, voir, vivre, visiter) and then to "practice them in order with one of the balls until everyone feels pretty comfortable with them." The third one (C) was a listening activity, where students left their tables to go to a rug in the corner of the room where there were a tape recorder and sets of headphones. There they listened to a recording of someone reading sentences, and they had to identify the tenses, future or near future.

The optional activity (D) was to "brainstorm a list of approximately five future sentences for each of these topics: en 2000,..., en 2020, ..., un jour (someday)..."

...that stupid worksheet on the future. It's so hard for some kids, too. (8)

... The Amsco worksheet. That's very, very tough. ...the kids that I was sitting with and helping were all having big trouble with that. They were trying to make the form of *aller* into the future. Their knowledge of what *futur proche* is so shaky that they couldn't really identify what it was they had to make the future. Once they saw that, they were OK. (6)

I mean, they knew futures, future forms, but they were making both verbs future, which showed me something I would not have seen any other way. This is one thing I really like about this kind of teaching. I could go over this as a whole class activity and put the right answers up for everyone to see, and they'd be taking notes, because they're very good students. They want to do it. They want to do well. And I would never know that they were doing that. (6)

[It's mechanical] ... nuts and bolts, something that's not really...something that nobody really cares about. It just shows words on a page being used. ...Well, I care that they do it. But it's only because I didn't find anything better, and I didn't create anything better. I felt like I wanted them to work with *futur proche*. I really think--I think we talked about this last time--I really want Intermediates to understand what they're doing. If they hear this stream of speech, that they can pick out certain things after they play it back to themselves--which I have to do. How can you analyze and comprehend something that you've never heard or seen? So, this is just a little step along the way. (7)

Part of me thinks that if they go to another school, if they take some kind of placement test, they may be asked to do something like this. It's nice to expose them along the way to things that they might have to do. (8)

[to be relevant]...definitely. Which is why I want them to do this brainstorming thing, which I think they will enjoy. (8)

Somebody put down that she'll be forty-two in some year. I'm starting to wonder where I'll be. But yeah, there has to be something. If you can't make it part of the initial presentation--I suppose you could, but you'd better do it at some point. If you can't, you maybe shouldn't be doing it. ... If there's no way to make it applicable to your life if you want to talk about yourself, or to have it help you get through a travel experience, what's the point? (8)

I see D (brainstorming) as being the one that would be the most enjoyable for them, and also the one where they'd have to have the most control over the future to be able to do it. (9)



## Holiday Activities

For the Holidays activities, there were three activities, two required (A, B) and one optional (C).

### A. Winter Holiday Reading

The first was to read a typewritten handout of three paragraphs: Chanukah, Le Solstice, and Noël. Each paragraph had blanks where students had to write in the correct form and tense of the verb in parentheses next to it, either the passé composé or the imparfait.

*I just want them to think about, and be able to articulate in French, eventually, their own traditions. (9)*

*A lot of the kids don't know if their own families are Catholic or Protestant. They don't even know what it means. So, I feel like I'm teaching them their own cultural traditions. Sure we'll do piñatas in here, and we might have time this year to make and eat a bûche de Noël in French class, but I don't really elaborate the target culture's traditions as much as ours, because they don't really know very much about their own culture. Most of the kids do not know that this is Hanukkah right now. They've never heard of the solstice. They don't know what the Christmas tree and the wreath represent. I think it's neat, myself. Things that you like are things you want to share with your students. (9)*

*I want them to work with verbs. I always want them to work with verbs. (10)*

### B. Dreidle Game

The second one was to do the Dreidle activity, which consisted of playing the Dreidle game. Students had a handout with a photocopied section that described in English the rules for playing, and a typewritten section next to it which listed goals for the activity and suggested French expressions for each phase of the game.

Tu ne fais rien.  
Prends le tout. Tu as de la chance!  
Prends la moitié des bonbons.  
Mets un bonbon au milieu de la table.

*I feel like it's fun. It's an opportunity to use some vocab, and you have to--you cannot not mention Hanukkah if you're going to mention Christmas at all. We'd be in big trouble. (9)*

*I think we'll play dreidle again on Monday, because the kids didn't...I think they want more.*

*... I want to hear them play more. I want to hear them get past the roughness of constantly having to look at the paper to know what the French is--you know: take half, or whatever. So I want that to get a little more smooth, so that they'll be doing what I call work, but it won't feel like work. ...learning the French expressions. (2)*

In their work groups, students received a dreidle and M&M candies to use as tokens.

### C. Dialogue Writing

This optional activity was to work with a partner "to begin writing a dialogue that incorporates your personal holiday traditions...and use the future in any way that you can make it fit."

*C is: begin writing a dialogue. That's directly related, so they can lift material from the reading [on the winter holidays] and use what they want, talk about it.*

With about 15 minutes remaining in class, Molly made sure that all groups were involved in the Dreidle activity. At the end of class, Molly announced in French, "on va finir toutes les activités lundi" (we're going to finish all the activities on Monday).





As the above outline shows, Molly linked activities and content--language and non-language. The diagram below illustrates these links as they appeared in the above lesson. Many of the activities address more than one content area, to be sure, but all content areas are addressed through Molly's choice of activities.



Figure 21: Content Areas

Molly used other activities as part of her teaching repertoire, it goes without saying, but those in this lesson represented the types of activities she employed in the lessons I observed and other lessons that she described.

To summarize, Molly's conception of activities involved logistical considerations of time, number of activities, and number of work groups. It also involved meeting certain criteria: variety, fun, challenging, doable, differing modalities, group interaction. Finally, Molly considered the language content: situations, vocabulary, grammar, proficiency skills, talking about students' own cultural traditions, working in the language, and her own modeling of French.



## **Outcomes**

Outcomes consisted of the results that Molly intended for students, that which she wanted them to achieve. As indicated by the preceding discussion, Molly did not limit her conception of outcomes to students' performance in French, as she also included the students' development of certain attitudes. These attitudes included students' participation in the activities, and by extension, their dispositions to language study represented in these activities and the activity-based approach overall. To a certain degree, students' attitudes were also related to the kind of relationships they and Molly developed. As described above, Molly's conceptions of outcomes, as with content, derived from Departmental intentions. With the changeover to the proficiency-based curriculum, conceptions of proficiency necessarily dominated during this time. However, as will become apparent, outcomes in French and outcomes in attitudes did not always represent separate or disconnected outcomes; they were often interconnected. In this section, I will outline Molly's conceptions of outcomes in these two areas: French, and attitudes.

## **French**

Intermediate Level students consisted primarily of students who are going on to college and a few others who are simply interested in learning languages. They had already completed the requirement of two years of study for college entrance requirements.

In the new system, students had the option of remaining at the Intermediate Level for another semester instead of opting to qualify for the Advanced Level course. The choice to move up the next Level was theirs, and should they so choose, they took the OPI (Oral Proficiency Interview), in addition to other final examinations. Obtaining a grade of Excellent or Adequate qualified them for the Advanced Level. In this system, therefore, Molly was responsible for preparing students to move up, with the realization that many might well choose to remain at the Intermediate Level.

In the Departmental guidelines for the Intermediate Level OPI, content areas were specified as follows:

Use Novice outline, since Intermediates should feel comfortable and be able to do more with Novice topics. Probe for past: childhood, recent past. Probe for future: next weekend, future plans. Culture and History as appropriate. \*Role plays: packing and customs, doctor & emergencies, travel market, directions. \*Complications only to elicit questions or additional vocabulary. (Minutes: Curriculum Work Session, 12/19/94)

Novice topics relate to biographical information--self, family, daily routines, etc., and to residence--"house, town, state, and related activities" (Minutes: Curriculum Work Session, 12/19/94). Otherwise, topics are drawn from Intermediate Thematic Units, with special attention to Situations (role plays with "complications") and to Grammar (past and future tenses). For the Intermediates, these two verb tenses were particularly important in moving up. Molly put it squarely: "That's a big filter to enter the Advanced Level: to be able to converse in past and future" (Curric 2:13).

Within these target content areas, there were also Departmental expectations of "performance level," which further clarified the intended outcomes:

Past: some correct regular and irregular forms and other markers of past





Future: some correct use of future forms

Accuracy: some consistent, confident use of correct forms--errors will occur but students shouldn't sound like they're guessing.

Ability to ask questions

Ability to consistently create with the language (Minutes: Curriculum Work Session, 12/19/94)

These specifications of performance levels reinforced the importance of the past and future tenses, as well as students' abilities to apply the language with some initiative and creativity. Also, the importance of accuracy was stressed. These specifications were consistent with the Departmental description of language courses (Foreign Language 1994-95), which spelled out expected outcomes for entry into the Advanced Level, according to Proficiency Skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. There, too, the importance of "present, past and future" tenses was stressed in each of the skill areas. Also mentioned were speaking "with some accuracy," and pronunciation: "well enough to be understood by native speakers used to dealing with non-native speakers," as well as the ability to handle a variety of common travel situations successfully and courteously" (ibid.). All in all, the emphasis was clearly on students' using the language, and manipulating the three key verb tenses.

Molly's conceptions of outcomes for French reflected those of the Department. She described similar intentions for students, and she often used "we" in descriptions of her own intended outcomes. However, Molly did go further. She spelled out additional distinctions in the Departmental outcomes, particularly in terms of their relative importance. For Molly, conceptions of outcomes in French were consistently linked to outcomes in attitudes. In fact, for her the outcomes in attitudes loomed larger than the outcomes in French. In Molly's words,

I find that this is an issue for me. I keep thinking, I keep wondering--I've always wondered--if our approach is really good. I think it is, because at the age our students are, we are--yes, we are teaching them skills--but it's just as important, and maybe even more important, the whole affective part, what we're doing to and for their attitudes. (Bio 2:17)

I will discuss the nature of these attitudes below. It is worth noting, however, that Molly considered them "just as important, and maybe even more important" than skills in French. In this way, outcomes in French and in attitudes were interconnected in Molly's mind.

With this interconnection in mind, let us return to Molly's central conceptions of outcomes in French:

- communication was more important than perfection;
- mastery happens elsewhere, later;
- students really own the language and work with it.

### ***Communication is more important than perfection***

By "communication is more important than perfection" (Curric 1:5), Molly held that students' getting their message across outweighed saying it accurately, without errors, or "letter perfect" (ibid.). More to the point, Molly saw students' attachment to perfection as connected to a fear of making mistakes. This, in her view, inhibited their speaking.



I think I'm speaking for the whole Department when I say that communication rather than perfection is primary, ... That it's important: rather than sit there and say nothing because you're afraid you won't be perfect, you know, say it. Spit it out. Who cares? (Curric 1:5)

Here, Molly shows how emphasis on communication was connected to the attitude of overcoming fear of speaking, or of showing a willingness or confidence to communicate in French.

Molly's many activities for using French to communicate were intended both for communicative ends and for bolstering confidence and overcoming fear. For instance, when describing her intended outcomes for the final Situation role plays for the Hotel Unit, where students chose "situation cards" with role plays to carry out with her, Molly was quite clear in her priorities:

I want everybody to get through the role play, and know that they can do it. (Obs 3:10)

I was looking for a feeling of confidence from them, that they knew what to do. (Obs 3:9)

### ***Mastery happens elsewhere, later***

The next conception, "mastery happens elsewhere, later" (Curric 3:22) involved Molly's views on what students were capable of achieving in French in the Departmental program. As she put it:

But as far as seeing somebody actually blossom and become a fluent speaker, a lot of that happens when they leave here, based on our work, but it's not entirely due to what happens here. With rare exceptions. I can think of a kid--a couple kids--in [the] Advanced class, who really are phenomenal language learners and speakers--who haven't traveled. But I think that for the majority of kids, mastery of this discipline happens elsewhere, later. (Curric 3:22)

This outcome seemed to serve at least two purposes for Molly: first, it imposed a realistic expectation on the situation, and second, it removed pressure to impose unachievable standards of achievement on students. Such mastery was not possible; therefore, other, more realistic outcomes were needed.

*Even to get to where we are implies standards.*

*Actually, for highly structured situations, I expect mastery on... Let me put it this way: grades do reflect mastery. If somebody's mastering minimal content, then they get a C or something. But mastery in the sense of becoming a true bilingual person or somebody with the kind of fluency that most people would like to have if they take a language, to actually be able to use it, we know it's a lifetime of work.*

*PM: So mastery means mastering the material covered in class?*

*Yeah. For what we're working on right now.*

*PM: So that's what you meant when you said 'standards'?*

*Yeah. What we do, especially at the lower levels, is present chunks of language and then to be able to have those be part of your active repertoire all the time, and to be able to connect them in unpredictable discourse is another matter. That's what I think I mean by fluency, mastery.*

*PM: They are able to master that?*

*Well, we encourage them to master that, because the OPI implies that they're able to do that.*





*Well, this [statement] is pretty accurate. How many kids are going to take a language in high school, not have experiences outside the classroom and really become fluent speakers? Nobody. So, yeah, I really do feel we're setting the stage. It's important to leave them wanting more, rather than say, "OK, I'm out of here. I'll never have to speak a word of French again, thank God." That would not be a good outcome, in my opinion. We want them to keep going. (Epilogue: 4/12/96)*

Because this level of mastery--becoming "a fluent speaker"--"happens elsewhere, later" for most of the students, Molly modified her intended outcomes to accommodate this postponement. She reconstructed her conceptions in terms of attitudes:

It also goes with our philosophy that you're not going to turn them into language geniuses overnight. You just have to keep moving in the right direction, and try not to turn anybody off along the way. (Bio 3:11)

For Molly, therefore, moving in the "right direction" suggested working toward increased proficiency, not mastery. It also suggested maintaining students' interest, engagement, and motivation as primary outcomes. Specifically, it called for an explicit effort to "not to turn anybody off." Mastery thus played second fiddle to student engagement in Molly's conceptions of outcomes.

*| Yes, I want them to want more. (Epilogue: 4/12/96)*

Postponing mastery in this way meant postponing language content, as well. Molly made decisions that relegated some content items to "elsewhere" and "later." This was especially evident in her decisions about grammar points. For example, in discussing whether or not to ask students to "internalize" third person indirect and indirect object pronouns, Molly indicated that these content items were "fine points" more appropriately learned in college--if students decided to continue their study of French:

I really like to have them interact a lot, not just to please them. You know, they do enjoy it. It's the only way we've got to get them to practice, to internalize what we're teaching them. So I have to make sure that what I'm teaching is worth that kind of internalizing. I'm not going to beat *lui* and *leur* versus *le* and *la* into the ground. No. That's a real fine point that they can pick up in college if they pursue it. (Bio 3:12)

Here, the mitigating factor seemed to be student engagement and involvement in the activities. For Molly to insist that students practice and internalize these points, she needed to be convinced that they were worth it; namely, that they were meaningful. In this instance, Molly decided that these were fine points that students could learn later on in college. The issue here is that Molly used the concept of "mastery elsewhere and later" as a criterion for deciding which content items students were to learn.

Another factor related to Molly's conception of mastery also involved language content. The content items in the Thematic Units of the Departmental curriculum, as described, were specified by each of the teachers in their courses, not by a textbook. Thus, the amount of material varied, especially when Molly compared it with other schools:

I know the kids who got placed in my Intermediate French class from other schools were surprised at what they already knew, compared to what I haven't even introduced yet. So I



think we give them less material, but we expect--I don't know if we get--we're hoping for better retention, and better overall mastery. (Bio 3:11)

It's important to note that Molly believed that less material, less language content, could lead to "better overall mastery." This suggested that students could potentially achieve greater control over a smaller amount of material, in effect, doing more with less. Even though she stated it this way, Molly did not seem convinced that this outcome was the case with her students.

Remember, too, that in order to move from one Level to the next, students did have to meet certain requirements. They did have to demonstrate proficiency, as described above. To enter the Advanced Level, for example, Intermediate students had to show an ability "to converse in the present, past, and future." Ability in the past tense in particular, as Molly stated, was a critical criterion. For instance, when she described students' ability to use the past tense, she provided concrete indications of what mastery involved:

Mastery is an interesting concept. Most kids didn't master it, couldn't produce it. It takes probably one cycle of Intermediate to be able to use it with any consistency, correctly, just one tense. They can recognize a whole lot more, but in just casual speech, there's very little control. (Curric 2:13)

Here, Molly named mastery as using the past tense consistently, correctly, and with control--a description that paralleled the Departmental description of "some consistent, confident use of correct forms" (Minutes: Curriculum Work Session, 12/19/94). In fact, she seemed to be using mastery as an equivalent of proficiency.

Molly appeared to use this conception of outcomes in varying ways. First of all, it was a filter which served to postpone certain language content and outcomes to later language study in another context. Secondly, it served as a reinforcement of the importance of students' attitudes of engagement in language study. That is, because mastery was not possible here, it was better to assure that students were interested and motivated. Finally, the concept of mastery was an essential feature of the proficiency-based curriculum. As such, it served as a reason for providing students with less material, and with more opportunities for practice. In this way, students could internalize language content and use it with control, consistency, and some accuracy.

### ***Students really own the language and work with it***

The third conception of outcomes, "students really own the language and work with it" (Curric 3:2), was also related to outcomes in students' attitudes. Essentially, this outcome consisted of "giving kids the tools right away to talk about what they want--their own stuff" (Bio 2:3). This was a feature of many activities that Molly employed, such as her emphasis on "recombinations" (Curric 3:9), where students took vocabulary and structures and created dialogues or presentations on topics. The connection to motivation, interest, and engagement in the language was in effect based on students' abilities and opportunities to choose what they wanted to say. In simple terms, because they could say what they wanted, students were interested and motivated.

Such an outcome had a central implication relative to language content: it emphasized students' "own stuff" over "real" French. Molly summarized this emphasis in no uncertain terms:





You know, we're working with their ideas and we're working with what we sneak in as an agenda, but comparing that with other programs, they're completely different, completely different in approach--which are also very successful--like the French in Action series. You might have read this review also...about someone who was raving about this program, because it was the closest thing to an immersion experience. Its main drawback from her point of view was that there was just no room for kids to do any...to create in any way, or to talk about themselves. So, we've opted for...I don't know. I don't know. What we've kind of created is...you know, I don't know how real it is. It's real French. I mean, we're using French, but it's not like the French that the kids who have experience with French in Action are getting. They're not seeing, our kids are not seeing--they've seen a couple of episodes, we kind of pirated some episodes from TV--but they're not hearing real French speakers speak French. (Bio 2:17)

Thus, students were using French to create, to talk about themselves. This was indeed "real French," since it represented students' talking about themselves and creating in the language. However, Molly saw that theirs was not the French that real French speakers use. Her reference to French in Action<sup>2</sup> pointed to the kind of French that was not featured in the Departmental curriculum.

Molly did question the kind of French students were exposed to in the Departmental curriculum. On the other hand, she also affirmed the greater significance of students' working on their own stuff--the outcome that ultimately dominated her conception. However, immediately following the above excerpt, Molly went on to cast doubt on the effects of exposing students to real French:

What's the good of taking somebody who knows no French, who thinks she might be interested, sit them down in the classroom and bowl them over--blow them out of the water--with some high-powered... I'm sure you could do French in Action, as an example--the materials are wonderful. But it could be too much. It could really turn people off, and be very discouraging. Or to foster an interest, and see somebody through a program, and the kids who have the interest and want to pursue it, will discover what real French is like. They'll take a trip. (Bio 2:18)

Here, Molly's attachment to the importance of outcomes of attitudes stands out. As she saw it, real French could threaten to "bowl over" students and ultimately "really turn people off"--exactly the opposite attitude Molly desired. Instead, she stressed the greater importance of students' creating their own stuff, talking about the things they want to talk about. Thus Molly could foster in students a wellspring of interest which could lead to their own further involvement at a later date, elsewhere--such as a trip abroad.

Interestingly, shortly after the interview that surfaced these comments, Molly hosted Martine, her French counterpart for the exchange program in France that Molly was to lead later in the year. Molly's comments after the week-long stay of this woman and her students revealed another dimension of her conceptions of the importance of "real" French.

And just the whole way of talking, and how they project their voices more, enunciate more--it's just so different. I think, to move on to implications for my teaching, that we do really need more videos and TV to show our kids that the differences are so much more than the words that are different. Maybe something like French in Action would be very, very helpful. (Curric 1:4)

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<sup>2</sup> Video-based materials that featured communicative use of French in situations in France with native speakers playing roles. (French in Action: A Beginning Course in Language and Culture. Pierre Capretz. 1987. Yale University Press: New Haven, CT).



Molly's direct contact and interaction in French with native French speakers seemed to have impressed upon her the importance of real French to students, and that real French, such as that in French in Action, could be "very, very helpful." However, this impression did not re-surface in subsequent interviews, whereas her earlier comments about the importance of instilling positive attitudes through students' creative use of language did.

To return to the importance of students' ownership of the language, the key conception under discussion here, two manifestations bear examination. One involved the outcome of Molly's yielding control over language content to students, resulting in something she referred to as "premature fluency" (Curric 3:2). The second involved Molly's expectation that students would necessarily come away with different things. In other words, she expected different outcomes for different students.

Molly's conception of premature fluency was what students tended to produce when encouraged to "own the language and work with it." She described it in this exchange:

M: . . . I was listening to French presentations today. I wrote down this thing: premature fluency, question mark. We are encouraging them to speak a lot, but they really are wildly inaccurate, and maybe our whole approach Departmentally--again, put that it quotes--we're turning kids loose to work with the very little materials that we can give them, really. They don't have any authentic models, except for an occasional feature film. We make the tapes. Or, they're just inventing stuff, and maybe by the time we catch it, maybe that's how they've learned it. So, we're encouraging them to really own it and work with it, and we really have given up a lot of control over what they do--which may be a weakness, we'll see.

PM: Over what they do in the activities, or in the kind of language that they produce?

M: The kind of language that they produce and internalize. (Curric 3:2)

Here, Molly attributed the inaccurate language that students produce and internalize to the materials that they work with--the non-authentic models of language, and to the emphasis on students' inventing stuff. The outcome, in effect, was students' language. Although this was a priority outcome in Molly's conception, she recognized that their language was not accurate, a potential weakness in the Departmental approach. Premature fluency was inaccurate language, non-authentic language.

Along these same lines, in yielding control to students through activity-based classes, Molly observed that "they're conversing in English the entire time, at my Intermediate Level, too" (Curric 3:2). However, "in the past, a lot of things people were saying to each other were in the target language" (ibid.). This created a problem. Students' ownership of the language in these instances was compromised by their choosing to use English instead of French to carry out activities designed to give them opportunities to "work in" the language.

*This is a problem. Students go through the activities, and then, "We did the crossword puzzle. OK, now what do we do? Can we go out in the hall?" This is a big problem. It's still happening. Jackie and I have had many conversations this year, because we are both in a supervision year. Our project is to get together and vent, basically, and document what we're talking about--because we both teach Novice and Intermediate. I think we both try to*





*supply, with our students in the whole-class activities, a lot of language. But they just don't. They're not picking up on it and using it among themselves. So that's kind of too bad.*  
(Epilogue: 4/12/96)

The second manifestation of students' owning and working with the language was Molly's expectation of differing outcomes from different students.

So, when I put it out there, what I want them to concentrate on--the fact that I have so many things going on at once--it almost seems crazy. How can they concentrate on anything? Because there are so many possibilities. But for the kids who can do it all, I know they will. The other kids will come away with something, even if it's knowing whether they are Catholic or Protestant. I want everybody to come away with something, and I don't care if it's the same thing. (Obs 1:13)

In part, as Molly indicated here, these differing outcomes were due to the varied activities available in class. However, the more critical factor appeared to be student ability: those "who can do it all...will," and "the other kids...will come away with something." Thus, Molly's expectations of outcomes was closely intertwined with students' abilities in the language. Because Molly expected them to invent and create in order to own the language, students would necessarily come away with different things. This outcome, however, was all right with Molly, since she did want "everybody to come away with something."

Thus, students' owning the language and working with it, in Molly's conception, invoked a tension between their created language and authentic French. Molly resolved this tension by granting greater importance to the outcomes of interest and motivation that come from students' creating the language. Also, students' owning the language resulted in outcomes that were often inaccurate, premature fluency. This happened because of Molly's yielding control over language content, which seemed to be a necessary risk that she had to run in order to have students create with the language. Finally, students' ownership of the language, because of their varying abilities, led to different results--an expected outcome in Molly's conception in this area.

The following diagram portrays Molly's intended outcomes for French:

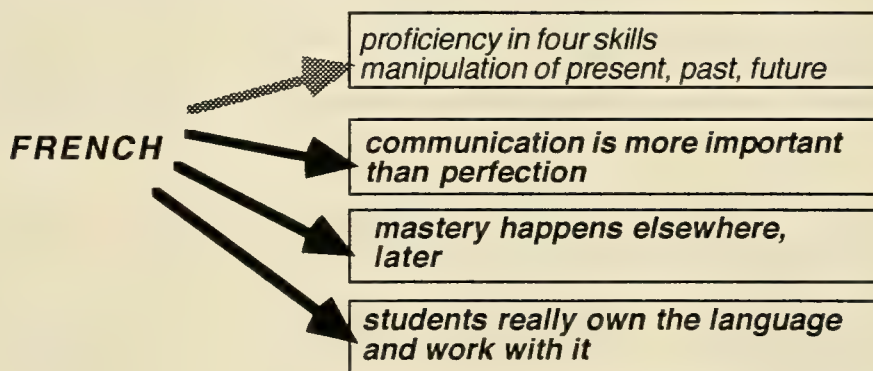


Figure 22: French Outcomes

Molly's conceptions of outcomes in French derived from Departmental outcomes. In addition to Departmental emphases on proficiency, and control of present, past, and future tenses, Molly held conceptions related to three principles: communication



is more important than perfection; mastery happens elsewhere, later; students own the language and work with it. As noted, all Molly's conceptions of French were interconnected with her conceptions of outcomes in attitudes, particularly fostering students' interest, motivation, and boosting their confidence.

### **Attitudes**

Molly's conceptions of outcomes in attitudes were inherent in her outcomes in French; however, she also looked for other attitudes which were not explicitly linked to performance in French. Such attitudes derived from students' experience of studying French, that is to say, their participation in the activity-based classes. Attitudes included students' accepting responsibility, showing effort, and enjoying the activities--having fun learning. Again, it is important to remember Molly's conception that for these students attitude development was a perhaps a more significant outcome than performance in French:

... at the age our students are, we are--yes, we are teaching them skills--but it's just as important, and maybe even more important, the whole affective part, what we're doing to and for their attitudes. (Bio 2:17)

Molly's activity-based classes, to reiterate, encouraged and depended upon students' assuming responsibility, being accountable, and accepting the consequences of their decisions and actions. Molly expressly designed and conducted the activities to create interest, motivation, and enjoyment. She also fashioned them to make the learning the material challenging yet doable, thus allowing students to feel successful and confident.

All in all, Molly's intended outcome was a "pleasant" learning experience. She wanted the students to come away positively predisposed to French and to learning French. Molly was unequivocal in this intention:

I do want the experience that my students have in my classroom to be pleasant. Always. Because even if they...I can't take them very far with the language, I feel like physicians--Do no harm. Some day they might want to come back to this, because they are so young. ... But they'll leave with a good feeling and a happy memory and a little bit of a foundation, and when they're able to really get it, at least they may want to come and get it. They won't say, "Oh God, I took that in high school and I hated it!" (Bio 2:4)

She linked this outcome to students' youth, and to the conception that their ability to get the language would come later in their lives. To best facilitate their engagement at a future point in time, they now needed positive feelings, "happy memories," as well as "a little bit of a foundation."

This said, however, Molly did not necessarily hold such a view for all students. Those who were able to get it, who qualified as "language whizzes" or "language geniuses" did not require such outcomes. For these students, all Molly had to do was give them the opportunity. They would do the rest.

Some kids I've seen dramatic success with already. You just have to open that door, and they run right through. That's a few kids. But the others, I just want to give them what they can handle and not turn them off. (Bio 2:4)

These students, as she said, were the minority. For the others, the majority, Molly intended outcomes of positive attitudes.





Yet, this distinction in outcomes because of students' abilities or aptitudes worried her:

... the first thing that popped into my mind was that sometimes the subject matter is completely irrelevant. It's just a tiny slice of pie on the chart, at this level, anyway. I kind of feel bad about that. I feel like it should be more. In France, I'm sure it is. Maybe at higher levels, it is. It's something that I continue to wrestle with: where is the major emphasis? Is it the subject? Is it something else? I can't turn them into language geniuses, but I can turn them off, very easily. I can just... I don't know if I'm doing my job right, maybe they should be language geniuses. It's a real issue for me. (Bio 2:8)

On the one hand, Molly clearly realized that some students, perhaps the majority of students, could not hope to achieve a high level of performance in French. In such circumstances, providing them with a positive learning experience was the best she could do. Yet she did wonder whether such an outcome was enough for them, that they could perhaps achieve more in French.

*I think that what we do, content-wise, if they master it--if they learn it well and can do the various role plays, it does prepare them for a lot of tourist situations that they're likely to encounter. So, we do expect pretty good mastery of those, if kids buy in. Assuring them that what they're learning is going to be useful, we can honestly do that.*

*"Providing them with a positive learning experience was the best she could do." There's something about that that just makes it sound like I don't care what they do. I really do care what they do, and I want them to be working and learning, and moving towards mastery. But I also care that it be done in such a way that they will enjoy it.*

*PM: So that doesn't reflect the way you think about things, there, that particular sentence? It's more of a question that they need to be working toward mastery.*

*Yeah. If they're working toward mastery, then they're working. I want to see that they are working. I want to see that they're trying. The way we have it set up, if they try they will succeed.*

*Especially when I think about what our counterparts in France are requiring of their students. Ouch. It works, but those are French kids and the culture is different. I think by throwing too much hard stuff at kids too fast is asking for disaster. Nobody will take French. So I guess, again to use that phrase 'appropriate challenge', I don't want it to sound like they come in and they don't do anything. They're held accountable by tests. . . .*

*It's important to give them something. They need to understand that something is expected of them, and that they can learn enough to function in a place where French is spoken, if they work. Like I do, like we all have to do. (Epilogue: 4/12/96)*

Another place where the emphasis on attitudes showed up was in Molly's approach to grading students' work. For each marking period, 50% of the grade was based on performance in French: written and oral tests, quizzes, dictations, and the like. 25% was based on classwork and homework, and 25% was based on oral participation in class. Classwork and homework were marked as completed or not, based on tasks assigned, and as Molly considered this practice work, she did not tend to check for accuracy. Completion of these tasks was a measure of students' responsibility and accountability. The oral participation grade was based on students' recorded attempts at speaking during activities. Molly had a way of noting these "participation points," as she called them, recorded in her "dot-matrix" tallying system. In this category, students could lose points for disruptive behavior, or for not applying themselves to the task at hand. Oral participation and classwork/homework thus



counted for 50% of students' grades for a marking period, and the outcome that Molly sought herein was "effort" and "involvement" (Obs 3:14).

To summarize, Molly's conception of outcomes in attitudes was linked both to outcomes in French and to students' participation in activity-based classes.

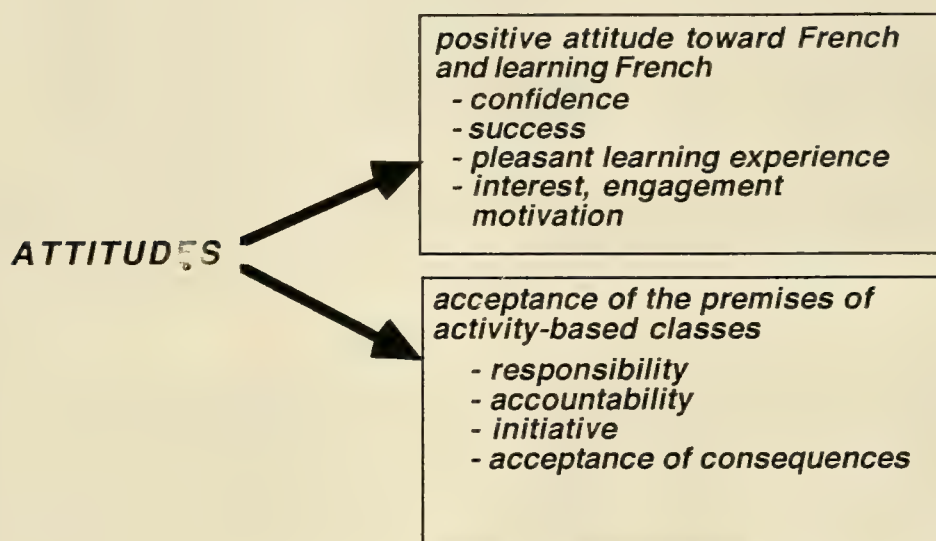


Figure 23: Outcomes in Attitudes

Above all, Molly sought to foster a positive attitude toward the language and toward learning languages, an outcome that was appropriate for students of this age, since most of them would not attain much fluency while in high school. The minority of students who "got" the language were less in need of such fostering. This positive attitude involved a pleasant learning experience, as well as attitudes of confidence, success, motivation, interest, and engagement. Alongside these attitudes were others that involved students' acceptance of the premises of activity-based classes, namely that they display dispositions of independent learners: responsibility, accountability, initiative, and acceptance of the consequences of their actions and decisions. Molly considered outcomes in attitudes at least as important than outcomes in French.

*Because attitude affects outcome. Nobody's going to learn how to speak a language that they hate. (Epilogue: 4/12/96)*

## Context

References to Molly's conceptions of context are stated throughout the preceding account. They appear in her conceptions of teacher role, students, content, activities, and outcomes. Rather than repeat those here in detail, I will simply allude to them in relationship to the other dimensions. When appropriate, I will supply additional descriptions

The Departmental curriculum, as defined by colleagues and interpreted by Molly, exerted a very significant influence on Molly's conceptions of content and outcomes. As described, the decision to forego textbooks, to establish proficiency as the base of the curriculum, and the expectation that teachers would supply the details of the





thematic units all affected Molly's conceptions. To a significant degree, Molly defined French largely in terms of Departmental expectations.

When asked about her own French, she described it as sufficient to the classes that she taught in school--"as far as what I have to get in there and do every day, it's OK" (Bio 3:16). Over her career to this point, French had not figured significantly in her life outside school, either in terms of formal study, trips abroad, or ongoing involvement with the language through reading or personal relationships with French speakers. Indeed, Molly's interactions with Martine, her visiting French counterpart on the exchange program, suddenly brought her into contact with another dimension of French. She described it this way:

When you were asking me to assess where I was now compared to when I first started teaching, that was hard for me to talk about. I really don't know how good I was back then, but I do realize right now the first thing that you lose is speed. The first thing that I lose, or the first thing that comes back when you're in contact is speed and certain expressions.

PM: Speed...?

Molly: Speed at which I speak. I guess, because I'm used to talking to students. When I'm talking to native speakers--who I usually don't come in contact with--(makes a swishing sound): ten gears higher. Also because I tried to visualize what my relationship to this language is on a day-to-day basis, and I realize it's kind of like a flat line. It's really pretty uninteresting. It's just kind of always been the same, so flat line, everyday stuff. I wanted to picture something three dimensional, and also I thought of a super nova, an exploding super nova--when you're in contact with a native speaker. So much more fun. So much more depth in every dimension. And so unpredictable. (Curric 1:1)

Her "day-to-day" relationship with French was "a flat line, everyday stuff," even "uninteresting," based on the kind of talking she did with students. What stands out in this excerpt is the role that the context played in determining Molly's concept of French. Molly tended to view French from the lens of her classroom and the curriculum of the classes that she taught.

Also, it seemed that Molly's opportunities to teach beyond the beginning and intermediate levels--and thereby interact with students at a higher proficiency level--were limited, since advanced courses in French tended to be assigned to another teacher. Molly explained the system this way:

I think it works like this. Linda... is the best speaker in the Department. Cathy is second. I'm third. I think whoever speaks the best French should have the highest level. I've taught that level and it was fine. (Bio 3:19)

*I really feel, as a parent, that if my kid were in Advanced level, I would want the best speaker to be teaching that course. I've taught it. The kids all learned. Everybody was happy. Linda has tried to get me into Advanced for next year. It's a small number of students. In a way, it's a plum, because you know they're all wonderful kids.*

PM: You decided not to do it?

*Well, I don't need a new prep. I know next year I'll be teaching a middle school section. I will probably also be teaching Novice Spanish and Intermediate French, so there will be three preps. Three preps is always difficult. Linda's suggestion was that--because we have been communicating within the Department our dissatisfactions, if we have them, about this new program--she suggested that I might feel better if I could see that at the Advanced level, things are OK. We might be doing a lot of agonizing in the middle, but the end*



*product is as good as it ever was. That well may be true. So the offer has been made. I don't want it to sound like people grab the upper levels and never give them up.*  
(Epilogue: 4/12/96)

This perception of the person who "speaks the best French" as being the most qualified to teach the highest level--even though she felt capable of teaching that level--was an important criterion for Molly, who chose not to give herself this opportunity, even though it appeared open to her.

*It's something that always can be negotiated depending on the logistical needs of the Department. Within reason.* (Epilogue: 4/12/96)

The French exchange trip to Switzerland, too, was primarily Linda's creation and her province, and until this year, Molly had not participated in it. The point is that Molly seemed to have defined her own French in terms of that of her colleagues' French.

Along these lines, Molly's perception of her place within the Department, in terms of seniority and of her relationship with the Department Head, also affected her conception of French. For example, the Department Head and Linda came up with the idea of the proficiency-based curriculum and presented it to the rest of the Department.

Molly had conflicting views of the Department Head. On the one hand, she clearly perceived the Head as an authority figure, one who regularly evaluated her teaching, and thus affected her job security. Molly had already nearly lost her job through a Reduction in Force decision, and she was still wary of this possibility. Also, the Head and Linda, in their training for the ACTFL Proficiency Tester certificate, interviewed and assessed Molly's Spanish and French proficiency, respectively, an assessment that Molly accepted without question. On the other hand, Molly affirmed to having learned a lot from the Department Head through her observations and evaluations of Molly's teaching,

*She's an authority figure, almost a mentor figure really. I haven't been evaluated by anyone but her in a long, long time, and I think she does a really good job of evaluating.*  
(Epilogue: 4/12/96)

The connection to French in this relationship appeared to be a matter of Molly's deferring to people in the Department with more experience and with more powerful personalities regarding curriculum decisions and assignment of levels.

*I still have my moments when I think, you know, how can I get rid of my blinders? Maybe it's [the curriculum] not working for me, because there's something I'm doing to sabotage it. You have to ask yourself these questions. But the bottom line for me is, I just think it's stupid to put first and second year students together. It's such a tremendous amount of energy to try to make it work, and maybe that energy would be better expended in another area. For me.* (Epilogue: 4/12/96)

On the whole, however, Molly felt that she and her colleagues were able to "get past" differences and work together as professionals:

Last time, I kind of--I don't know. I was talking about the Department in a way that kind of showed that it's not exactly a can of worms, but when you open the lid, there are some nasty little things squiggling around in there. I just really want to stand by that, because we've done a tremendous job professionally as a Department, because I think we're able to--we all want to work to the common goal, plus I think it's a credit to [the Head's] ability to lead us. But it is true





that these little interpersonal things are there. I think it's important for you to be aware for your own purpose that we're just ultra-professional. We're able to get past that. (Curric 1:4)

The "common goal" that Molly and her colleagues were working toward was also an integral part of Molly's conception: "communication rather than perfection is primary" (Curric 1:4). The following exchange showed Molly's personal connection to the collective views of her colleagues:

M: Well...I think I'm speaking for the whole Department when I would say that communication rather than perfection. Just a philosophy of..."I don't care, just tell me something. You know, if all you can say is *comer*, I think I'll know what you mean." You know, "*hambre!*"

PM: Get your message across.

M: Yeah.

PM: As opposed to...?

M: Being able to come out with something that's letter perfect. I think that goes along with our...Well, it's appropriate for Novices. Absolutely. It also goes with our philosophy that you're not going to turn them into language geniuses overnight. You just have to keep moving in the right direction, and try not to turn anybody off along the way. (Bio 3:11)

As described earlier, Molly did see herself as part of a collaborative effort. For example, her own effort to make grammar "meaningful," and not "mechanical" was, in her eyes, a shared view. When asked about her reasons for teaching grammar in this way, she described her decision in terms of the Department:

M: . . . What is not OK is to do something outside of a meaningful context, completely.

PM: And that not OK is coming from...?

M: Uh... Departmental philosophy, and I'm part of it. (Curric 3:23)

Another influential factor in her conception of French seemed to be Molly's perceptions of students' attitudes and abilities regarding French and language study in this school. As described in the section on Teacher Roles, Molly seemed confronted with a dilemma: whether to push students to become "language geniuses", or to focus instead on not "turning them off." In this situation Molly opted to emphasize students' developing positive attitudes and responsibility as learners, rather than their developing mastery in French.

| *Although mastering a challenge leads to positive attitudes. (Epilogue: 4/12/96)*

## Sources

How did Molly arrive at her conceptions of teaching French? There are suggestions in the interviews, but it does seem that an important source of her views derived from her work with colleagues in the Department, and her original decision to become a French teacher.

As outlined above, her relationship with colleagues and the Departmental decisions and initiatives regarding curriculum seemed a primary source for Molly's views. The decisions to reconfigure the Levels, to establish a proficiency-based curriculum, to forego textbooks, to teach activity-based classes all affected Molly's conceptions of the French she taught. Also, Molly taught French primarily to Novice and Intermediate Levels; other teachers consistently taught the Advanced Levels, and up



until this year, Molly had had limited involvement in the exchange programs with Switzerland and France. Her collaboration with certain teachers in the Department on differing projects also affected Molly's views.

Molly's interest in pedagogy did seem to dominate her thinking. The following excerpt shows how her views evolved over time through her relationships with colleagues and the collective efforts of the Department:

I don't know what it was that pushed me--maybe the fact that when you first start teaching, you're so nervous and you're so wrapped up in what you're doing that it's hard to think about the kids. Maybe I had enough experience to realize that maybe I was bored. Or maybe I just wanted to engage the kids more. But something happened to make me want to do more student-generated stuff. So I began to think about testing speaking. I'm sure I read journal articles along the way that made me think, This is neat. This is what language learning is all about.

I think that a lot of us in the Department were kind of in the same place, at the same time. We were all kind of--we're not all cut from cookie cutters--but we're pretty much the same age, and the same number of years experience, and we were just kind of ready. So we all started to do more oral testing, which led into logistical problems, since we have to have a room full of kids every day at a certain time. What do you do? So, creating activities that would either review or have them interact--something to go along with oral testing.

Several years ago, [the Department Head] got funding for a curriculum project and asked Jackie and me if we would pull together what we were doing at levels I and II for oral testing, across languages. So we did. That was like four days worth of work in the summer. We came up with a notebook, a document, which happened to be thematically arranged. (Bio 3:6)

These efforts prefigured the Departmental move toward a proficiency-based curriculum and the Thematic Units. Also, Molly's work with Jackie on the oral testing component led to the conference presentation. The seeds of the changeover to the activity-based class are also evident in this statement.

The collaborative nature of the Department, where teachers discussed and decided upon curriculum matters, did involve give and take, and managing disagreements. Because the curriculum was not textbook-based, the teachers needed to agree on the Thematic Units, at the very least. Molly described how she needed to defend the State Unit, one that she had originally created:

We used to have turf issues around our courses, and we kind of still do. It's understood that certain people will teach certain courses, unless they are on leave, or something.

I felt like I had to have my way. I developed the State unit, you see. This is my baby. Back in second year. We had a Departmental work session where Linda and [the Head] had been assigned to make some decisions regarding the Novice curriculum. I was with the Intermediates. I could hear that they were saying, "Well I don't really, I don't think we should, I don't think it's appropriate, Let's not do such and such and such." I became so incensed. I had to jump up out of my chair and go over and tell them what I thought. "We should keep X for this reason. I've done it, It will succeed. It is not too much." I like the idea of a shotgun blast. Different kids will come away with different things. And it is. It is a ton of material, but I think that's good. It's Novice stuff--memorized vocabulary, not grammatical manipulation. It gives kids a lot of choices. (Curric 1:5)

As detailed earlier, Molly's views on content appeared to have been shaped by such discussions with colleagues.





Clearly, a key feature of Molly's conception of teaching French centered on activities, specifically the activity-based class. She was instrumental in bringing this pedagogy to her colleagues, and it was eventually accepted as the "modus operandi" for the entire Department. Molly got the idea "from talking about what goes on in elementary school classrooms" (Obs 1:17), and from her husband, an elementary school teacher:

I remember that several years ago, when cooperative learning was the new wave, my husband was using that at the elementary school--they're the first ones to do everything. So, that idea came from me. Now, we played around with groups. I found out that I really don't like to seat kids in groups. I would rather have a different configuration. But many of the people in the Department do like that best. I can take credit for that idea. (Bio 3:9)

| *I think people were ready for something new, and that just happened to be it.*  
(Epilogue: 4/12/96)

The source seemed to derive from Molly's general orientation to pedagogy, an orientation much broader than language teaching pedagogy itself. In fact, her outlook on her teaching started with activities:

What I think I do is this: I still think in terms of activities rather than objectives or outcomes too much, and it really should be the other way around; I think of things that will allow for student-to-student interaction and engagement as much as possible; and I try to carve up the time pie in slices that are enjoyable and productive. (Journal 10/12/94)

| *This is still very true.* (Epilogue: 4/12/96)

Activities first. As Molly stated flatly, devising activities was "the new twist that keeps this from being boring" (Curr 3: 21).

The facilitator role, Molly's preference, was critical to the success of an activity-based class, and it fit her perception of herself as a teacher. However, it seemed to conflict with her perception of what a teacher really ought to be. This conflict had its roots in her decision to enter the profession. Remember that the pressure of scrambling for materials had led her to question her role. In this questioning, she also wondered about her original motivations to teach.

I just think I became a teacher by default. I never went through high school thinking that I would ever want to be a teacher. My skill was language, and I wasn't adventurous enough to do anything else with it. There are so many days when I think--and there have been through the years, and I'm sure there will be more--that I'm in the wrong business. I'm an introvert. I'm shy. I don't like to make people do things that they don't want to do. I'm not really an entertainer. I'm not funny. So, I feel like, this is the wrong place for me. But on a good day, it's great. But on a day when the workload just seems to be intolerable--and that's many days--or the prep time is so inadequate--that's a real issue in our school this year, I've got to get out of here. (Bio 3:14)

In this excerpt, Molly highlighted her conflict of teacher roles. Without question, she did know from experience that the facilitator role was indeed effective--"on a good day." Yet, on other days when the pressures of workload bore down upon her, Molly questioned its validity. These questions led her all the way back to her original decision to become a teacher when she was in college, which she termed as "default."



Molly went on to explain what she meant by "default":

M: . . . That's the choice that I made. It just kind of happened. It's just that I didn't make any other choice. I think there are people... There are lots of teachers who always wanted to be teachers. They wanted to serve, or they loved kids, or something.

PM: But those weren't necessarily motivations that you had.

M: No. No, I was looking for...how am I going to survive in this cold, cruel world. (Bio 3:15)

It does appear that Molly's college experiences were instrumental in her outlook. Not only was her decision to become a teacher made by default, but her decision to teach French appeared to be, as well.

I went right into college the next year, like so many other sheep who really don't know what they're doing. And I didn't. I really didn't. I mean, the expectation for me, which I never questioned--and I guess a lot of people in that time and place never questioned, was that I would go to the [university], which is actually a very good school and has a strong language Department. And I said, "Well the only thing I'm good at is French, so I guess I'll be a French major. And the only thing you can do with it is teach it, so I guess I'll be an education major." (Bio 1:10)

I thought I was going to be a history major. Because I love it. And the person who was counseling me as an extension student said, "You know, that's great." . . . I was very motivated. Finally, this lady said to me, "There are no jobs for history majors. Your only prayer is to stick with French." So I did. (Bio 1:13)

Thus, Molly became a French teacher because it seemed to her like the only option available. The pressures to get a job were paramount, and she didn't see any other opportunities at the time. In fact, Molly described how she went from learner to teacher of French in a rather direct way:

Talking about [my experiences] has really made me realize just how--I mean, sure, I had some deviations along the way--but it was from school as a learner to school as a teacher and not a whole lot in between. (Bio 3:3)

In addition, this "default" decision involved Molly's perceptions of authority and her responses to it. In the following excerpt, she described a tendency to submit, rather than trusting her own judgment. As an example, she cited her father's reaction to her thoughts of joining the Peace Corps after college:

Oh, and vis-à-vis authority. This is a big issue for me. It continues to be. I've always kind of, I don't know, probably tiptoed through life being afraid to offend people, who might have power over me in some way, especially with the livelihood, now. So, I don't know if I'll ever change that. I don't know if I ever want to, but I think it's a very important thing to be aware of, that tends to be how I would react. If I reacted without thinking, it would be very...shrinking away, kind of submissive, kind of reaction to, "You will do this." "OK." That kind of thing. In fact, when you told me that you were in the Peace Corps, this reminded me very much of... Probably a lot more people have thought about than have done it. And I thought about it. My father said to me--he didn't give me an order, I was too old--he said, a message like, "Don't you think it's about time to get a job? After all, you've wasted enough time." And I never pursued it. I really didn't have the confidence in my own judgment to just do what I wanted. So, the whole authority issue is just very interesting to me. (Bio 2:1)

During the time of this study, Molly seemed to be in the process of shifting her stance in response to authority. She described an incident that occurred during an open house, where parents visited the teachers:

Well, the superintendent has a son in one of my classes. Maybe because I have been thinking about authority... He was there because he wanted to be a parent, and I told him, I told the





other parents, "I'm always late to this class, because when the block schedule was designed in its final form, the passing time that we were promised was the first to get chopped." And he was just looking at me... This is reality. I told him the truth, that when I get there, the kids are already in the room. They have set a tone. This is reality. And I also put in a plug for the elementary teachers, because I said, "We're doing what elementary school teachers have always done, which is try to teach to more than one population in the same room, at the same time."

So, maybe I'm getting a little braver. Now that I've confronted the fact that I've always been a cringer and a runner, maybe I can choose my time and my way to do something about it. Because they can't fire me for telling the truth. They can fire me for incompetence or any number of other things. (Bio 2:12)

Molly's views on authority were thus in flux, and she was in the process of taking on a new stance, standing up for her views.

In sum, Molly's perception of herself as a French teacher and her involvement with her classes and her colleagues in the Foreign Language Department, particularly around matters of curriculum and pedagogy, appeared as primary sources in the development of her conceptions.



## Summary

By way of an overall summary of Molly's conceptions of teaching French, I offer the following schema:

### Context

Molly and her colleagues in the Department worked together to produce the curriculum and to decide on the requirements for advancement from one Level to the next, as well as the oral proficiency interview procedures and criteria. They pooled materials in a common file in the Department Head's office for use by all, and they also discussed curriculum options and refinements in regular meetings throughout the semester. The Department places the responsibility for the development of a detailed curriculum on the shoulders of the teachers, with the significant proviso that there is no official textbook. The language content comes out of the teachers' heads, from their sense of what is important in the curriculum topics. Teachers are also given autonomy over teaching approaches, although there is a preference for activity-based classes. The Department Head was responsible for evaluating teachers' performance on the basis of goals set by the teacher and classroom observations.

### Teacher Roles

Molly prefers a facilitator role, setting up the activities and circulating to monitor students' work. This role included not only setting up activities and overseeing student involvement, but also documenting student participation in the activities. In this role, the learning activities and student involvement occupy center stage. While some students were able to do this, others were not, and expected more intervention from the teacher, either to enforce participation in the activities, or simply to be more present in what they were doing. To Molly, these additional roles involved setting limits and sometimes playing a more authoritarian role (which she disliked). Tempering these facilitator and authoritarian roles is Molly's role of doing "no harm" to students' attitudes toward language and learning, essentially a nurturing and parenting roles.

### Students

Students of this age in this context, with a few exceptions (the "language geniuses") are incapable of attaining mastery of French, in Molly's view. Students are very sensitive as to the importance or relevance of subject matter and are predisposed to see school as boring and irrelevant. Second language study in particular is not a priority at this time in their lives. At the same time, they are young, immature, fragile, and in need of support and guidance in their development.

### Language Content

Language content needs to be relevant, meaningful, interesting, challenging, yet doable--the target criteria for Molly. The Departmental curriculum emphasizes language proficiency, the use of language--vocabulary and structures--in everyday communicative situations approximating those that students would encounter as sojourners in France. Also, there is an emphasis on students' creative use of the language, on their "ownership" of it, and on their self-expression of topics of interest to them. A third content emphasis is grammar, in particular the present, past and future tenses, which is less immediately relevant to students, and therefore needs to be made meaningful. This is a challenge, given that much of effective manipulation of these tenses depends on control of "mechanical" aspects--memorizing linguistic forms--which Molly sees as uninteresting activities.

### Activities

For Molly, the driving force for delivering the curriculum was the activity-based class, which is based on students working independently or collaboratively with others on a variety of learning tasks during a class period. This approach depends on students' assuming responsibility, budgeting their time and effort, being accountable, and accepting the consequences of their decisions. The activities are intended to be engaging, interesting, and as much as possible, fun. There are occasional activities involving the whole class, but for the most part, students are working in small groups for the class period, interacting with each other either in French or in English about French.

### Outcomes

Mastery, or fluency, is something that all but a few students can achieve later, when they are older, in college, or able to travel to France. What they can come away with from their language study is a foundation in French, but not any real degree of fluency. Therefore, the most useful outcome is attaining a positive attitude toward French and learning French in particular and toward language study in general, since such a disposition will increase the likelihood of their taking up language study after high school.





## Epilogue

Over a year after our last interview, sixteen months to be exact, I met with Molly to read and hear her comments about the draft of the account. She began by saying that she felt that I had accurately reflected what she had talked about in the course of the nine interviews. She then went on to go through the text from beginning to end, stopping where she had written notes in the margin. She explained these, and in a few instances, she provided additional information, either to reinforce the point in the text, or to expand upon it, or to question it. Molly's written and oral comments very much included her present perspective, sixteen months later. Many of her comments I simply embedded in the preceding account in those places that prompted her to respond. Others, however, seemed worthy of special mention, so I have put them here, as an epilogue.

- In her comments, Molly returned again and again to the changes in scheduling and curriculum that had just begun when this study was first initiated. Now, drawing on her added experience dealing with block scheduling and the proficiency-based levels and curricula in the Foreign Language Department, Molly actively questioned the effectiveness of both. Her guarded reservations about the program a year ago were now more pointed, and she felt strongly that the curriculum and the levels had weakened the program. Students were achieving less, in her view, and she was ready to return to the old system.

The problem in our semester course is really running short of time. This is surfacing as a real acute problem at the Intermediate level, because we're supposed to do the Survival Units and do a heavy dose of grammar. Really, there isn't enough time to do both those things well in one semester.

...

Last year's class, having come out of a more traditional program was able to go that much farther. This spring I have a group of kids who--some of them anyway--were kind of marginal to begin with. They didn't cover very much content at the Novice level, or they certainly didn't have much of a structural, grammatical framework to hang it on, and they've been away from it for a long time.

This deficit, I think, is really accruing. Unless we really do something soon to our program, we're going to find ourselves where we never intended to be. I don't know if [the students] will get to the upper levels. They're struggling with the tasks that I would have expected that they would have less trouble with. Survival units, for example, which is basically memorized material. And then to being with grammatical analysis, and to try to get them ready for the exit into the Advanced level, which is future and past... They're having trouble getting a grip on it. It's a lot, all in one semester.

This is why anybody who's considering a move to block [scheduling] should think very carefully about this, because languages are many things, but you can't pretend that they're not sequential. They really are, in my opinion. Little bits for an extended period of time are more valuable. The brain does better with that than a whole lot for a little while, and then none for a long time. Although, statistically, what they say about the forgetting curve is that it's not that big a deal, what I see contradicts that.

So last year, I kind of floated through this thing on an adrenaline rush. Now with the extra prep and seeing where the kids are, I'm ready to scrap it and go back to the old way. Even



without a text. If the levels made better sense to me and the classes were a little bit shorter, I think it would be better. (Epilogue: 4/12/96)

- Molly also now wondered why she had not trusted her own judgment when the changeover was first proposed over a year ago, and why she hadn't spoken up.

I really question whether that's happening. I think if we were unhappy with our program before, if we thought our second year kids weren't doing anything, we should have taken a good look at second year and what our expectations were, instead of flying off in this radical direction that doesn't really make a whole lot of sense. But when I thought, and think, that it doesn't make a lot of sense, if it's an idea being proposed by somebody that I respect, I think that there's something that I'm not getting, something that I'm not seeing. I think that they're right and I'm wrong. That's why I didn't scream when we first started talking about this. The Chair and Linda cooked this up, proposed it to us, and we all nodded our heads. I don't know if other people in the room were saying, "Wait a minute. Let's put the brakes on." Or if they all said, "Wow, why didn't I think of that? She's the Chair, Linda's smart. If I don't think it sounds good, there's something wrong with me." That's a problem that I have: being able to have confidence in my own perception of what's happening. (Epilogue: 4/12/96)

- Molly's earlier questioning of her role was now expressed as "burn-out."

I'm burned out. I've known it for years. How about putting, "At times, I feel burned out." But I really think I am. Not totally, not burnt to a crisp, but I am getting a little toasty. I know that I've been doing this for a long time without a break, except for the summers--which you have to have that, to recover. I don't know if this is true, but someone told me that Canadian teachers are required to take every fifth year off, and do professional development, and they're still paid. That would be good. I think we need that. I think if I could find...well, never mind. I'd say bye-bye. I'd be gone. There are so many days when I look around and say, "What am I doing here? This place is so crazy." (Epilogue: 4/12/96)

- Molly's early career decision to go directly from college to teaching French now seemed to her like a choice that had resulted in her skipping a developmental stage. She now wanted to explore other options.

Oh, something I really didn't talk about today, but I think really is significant. That's how I went straight from being a student to being a teacher, without living in between. Without really doing anything else. Without doing any other kind of work.

PM: You said that's really important?

I think it is, because that's my next task. To either come to terms with the fact that I made this decision, I'm in it for the long haul and that's how it's going to be, or not.

PM: So, "did I do the right thing, back when I was a student?"

I'll never know. You never know if you did the right thing, because it appeared to be... I mean, for me, it appeared to be the only thing. So, you know, the fact that I have kids to raise is going to keep me in this job, or another one that's at the same economic level, for the next decade or so. Because I'm a conscientious person, I'm going to really, really try to do a good job, try to be looking at what I do, and try new things.

...  
It's just a huge chunk of my life that has taken place inside those same walls. There's going to be a day when I don't know if I can walk in there again. Especially when it's getting so strange.

Yeah, I really think I need to go back. There's a developmental stage that I missed somewhere, between school and work. That's my work now, to find out if I'm just





fantasizing, or if there really is something that I could do with my skills, besides try to fire up the next generation of kids. (Epilogue: 4/12/96)

- During the interim period, Molly returned to France after a twenty-year hiatus, and her experiences there showed her that her French was "better than ever." They also suggested to Molly that her relationship with the French language was like "an outfit she put on for special occasions," and was not really a significant part of her life.

My experience with hosting [Martine], and with traveling [in France], was just so much fun. It was great. It was nice. It really made me think when I got home, the only thing I could think of was taking off the outfit and hanging it back in the closet. There it sits.

PM: Which outfit?

French. It's like something that you wear every couple of... For somebody like me, it's something that you put on a couple of times every year, and the rest of the time it's hanging in the closet. Like [the trip to France] or having France come here. It was tremendous fun, and it was very validating. . . .

PM: The outfit is like clothing you put on for special occasions. Why is that?

Well, it's kind of like, how much does a high school math teacher use all the math they had to master in college? Never. I think that it has to do with the fact that the way my life is. I don't travel much. At home I don't speak French. I don't watch TV. We have a dish. I could watch all kinds of stuff, but I'm not a big TV watcher. I'm not really into foreign films a whole lot. Or music. It's only a special occasions kind of thing. . . .

It would be real easy for me to blame this on the fact that I work full time. Anybody who works full time doesn't really do a whole lot else, besides work. I could do more. I could go to these little groups that meet in town and speak French, but it's not really my thing. It's not my circle of friends anyway. It's just very strange how the thing that I've chosen to do with my life has nothing to do with my life. I really like it, and I have talent as a language learner. Traveling--last year was a good traveling year because I got to go to Mexico, too--that was tremendously validating and added so many dimensions to the experience to be able to speak to the people who live there. . . .

I really keep thinking that it is like the special outfit.

. . .

PM: Almost like physically removing it. So what do you wear normally? Do you have another outfit?

It's interesting. I think it's because I teach two languages and I really like both of them. I really never have adopted a persona of being Madame or Señora. I don't really feel... I can't be three people. I don't know. It's just kind of like a hobby, but something you don't get to do very often. I could do more. I just don't. I don't read. I'm not a great reader of French. It's too hard. Really, I find it hard. Literature. I would never ever consider anything like getting a doctorate in literature, or anything like that. Which is interesting, because I really do read a lot. I've always been a bookworm. But reading French, it's too much work. Too idiomatic, too dense. So, it's just my subject area. There's really virtually no crossover between my subject area and my life. (Epilogue: 4/12/96)

All in all, Molly continued the questioning that had occupied her in the previous year, both of herself and the Department.

Well, one thing is that constant wondering and readjusting, informally assessing is whether what you're doing is effective. I mean, this is kind of like a very general thing. I think it's important to note that we're always scrutinizing. We: the Department, we're always...this is a



work in progress. And also, I, on a smaller scale, wondering, even if it is effective, is it something that I'm going to be able to continue to do? Because I think what we've done in this school, in a school which is difficult to teach in anyway, because it's so loose, we've made our jobs as hard as we possibly can for ourselves.

There are so many enjoyable moments, because kids are neat, and I really like languages and I want to preach the gospel. You've got to work. You've got to live. I really don't know what else I would do. But I'm looking. (Epilogue: 4/12/96)





## Carl Harvey

Carl Harvey, a tall man in his forties with sandy colored hair and blue eyes, was now in his twenty-second year as a foreign language teacher, having taught in this high school for all his career. He taught French courses and an introductory Russian and a German course. From time to time, especially in earlier years, he taught a beginning Spanish course. For the past sixteen years, Carl acted as the Chair of the Foreign Language Department, which now had six teachers in the high school, three Spanish, and three French, including him.

The school was located in a town with a population of 23,000, in the eastern part of the state of New York. The high school and the middle school were in adjacent buildings on the edge of town, bordering another town of 15,000. The high school building was a long one-storey structure which fronts the road for about three city blocks. The Foreign Language Department was at one end of the building, beyond the music and art departments, where there are 5 classrooms shared by both the French and Spanish courses. About 7 years ago, the language program was expanded to include the middle school. In sixth and seventh grades students took 20 weeks of exploratory studies in French or Spanish. In eighth grade, students completed the first year of study, Level 1, before moving on the high school and, if they chose, four more years of French or Spanish. There were four additional teachers of French and Spanish in the middle school.

Carl was born and raised in the state. He attended a state college in the western part of the state, graduating in 1973 with a major in French and secondary education. Following graduation, he was hired at this high school to teach four classes of French and one of Spanish. At that time, he was one of three language teachers. One of these teachers, his longtime colleague Chuck, was still teaching French in the department, now in his twenty-fifth year at the school. The other French teacher, June, had been teaching in the department for eight years now.

Carl's interest in foreign languages began in junior high school in the 1960s, when he studied Russian. He continued Russian through high school, and in his junior year he started French, because of greater job possibilities. In college, he majored in French and received a lot of support and encouragement from his professors. Out of a passion for languages and a desire to avoid math and science requirements, he also took courses in German, Spanish, Italian, and Russian. In his junior year, he studied in Caen, France as part of the junior year abroad program in the college. When he returned for his senior year, he completed his teaching internship under the guidance of his French and education professor.

In Caen, Carl, for the first time, had to use French to communicate. This was a significant shift from the emphasis on grammar he had previously experienced in his college courses in French. Living with a French family thrust him into a situation where he had to use French differently. While challenging, ultimately his junior year



in Caen was a success, an experience that he found fascinating, different, and enjoyable. More important, he learned to speak French better and developed a lot more personal confidence.

Shortly after he began teaching in the high school, he and Chuck started taking groups of students to France through established travel programs. After two years, in order to help students establish more personal contact with the French, they decided to do a homestay exchange program through an organization specializing in this sort of thing. This consisted of a three-week program in January and February with a school in Evreux, France. Eventually, because of the inconvenience of the winter scheduling and their realization that they could organize their own exchange program, they did just that. They found a school in Fontainebleau willing to participate, and in 1983, they began their own program. Every year a group of students and teachers from one school visited the other for two weeks for a homestay with families of participating students. Thus, every other year, Carl and his colleagues accompanied a group of juniors or seniors to Fontainebleau. During the year of this study, the French were the hosts, and Carl's colleagues, June and Chuck, were taking a group over in the spring.

The exchanges had an impact on Carl. Over the years, his French improved through the homestay experiences with French families, and his confidence in his abilities grew, as well. In addition, he developed relationships and friendships with host teachers, families, and other French people. Using French for communication and developing relationships thus assumed greater and greater importance in his French courses as the years progressed, and in his own relationship with French.

These exchange programs became an integral part of the French program at the high school. They were reserved for junior and senior students who continued their study of French for a fourth or fifth year. In fact, the curricula for these years, Level 4 and 5, were organized around preparation for the trip and the homestay, and around life in France. Together, Carl and June had developed and taught the Level 4 and 5 courses, which emphasized communication, culture, and personal adaptation. The program demanded a lot of work from all three teachers, especially coordinating and conducting extracurricular activities, and involving families and other members of the local community. The school administration supported the department by allowing an additional week off from school and by supplying buses for transportation.

Beyond the exchange program, the language curriculum was also significantly affected by three outside influences: 1) the New York State Education Department guidelines for foreign language instruction and the derived New York State Regents Examination for foreign languages, 2) the Advanced Placement Examination, 3) University in High School program. The state guidelines emphasized proficiency in speaking, listening, reading, and writing, with communicative use of the language as an overall goal. These emphases were reflected in the Regents Exam which students took at the end of three years of language study, one part of the Regents Diploma. These guidelines influenced the curriculum for the first three years in Carl's school, eventually resulting in the selection of a textbook series which met these guidelines. For those students who elected to go beyond the third year and the Regents exam, the Advanced Placement exam, a nationally administered test,





also emphasized proficiency in the four skill areas. Students in Level 5 who scored well on it had the possibility of getting college credit or advanced placement, depending on the college or university.—The foreign language department instituted this option in 1990. The University in High School program was sponsored by a nearby state college, which offered college credit for successful completion of Level 4 and 5 courses at the high school.

Such options, along with the exchange program, helped make the foreign language department competitive with other subject matters in the school where Advanced Placement and college credit were also offered. In the year of this study, 55% of the school population was enrolled in language courses, which Carl attributed not only to these offerings, but also to the kind of learning experience that students got in Levels 4 and 5. There were two tracks of students in the language program: Honors and Regents, the former completing three years as sophomores, the latter as juniors. The Regents track, also known as the "Rs", are assumed to have lower language abilities by some teachers in the Department, which Carl referred to as a "stigma."

Carl became Department Chair in 1978 and held the position since then. With this added responsibility, he taught three courses of French and one of Russian, for a total of three preparations--his typical workload pattern. He had taught all levels and courses in French, teaching the Advanced Placement course for the first time last year, 1993-94. This year, he taught the two sections of 10R, the sophomore Regents track, and Level 5, the seniors in the Honors track.

Over the years, Carl participated in a number of conferences and institutes. In 1979, he received an AATF scholarship to study at the University of Laval in Québec. For many years, he was active in the state foreign language organization and was president of the regional chapter of AATF at one time. From 1987 to 1988, he was a student in a summer MAT program with a concentration in teaching French. In the summer of 1994, just prior to this study, he studied Francophone Language and Literature on a one-month program sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities.

In 1989, Carl undertook what he called "personal growth work," consisting of seminars, workshops, and courses which allowed him to examine his personal life and its relationship to his professional work as a teacher. His work in this area transformed his approach to teaching and to the French he taught. In a word, his attention shifted from teaching French to teaching students. At the time of this study, Carl was teaching courses on these topics to teachers from area schools, teachers of students of different ages, and of different subject matters. French, for Carl, had become a "by-product" (Bio 1:6) of his work on helping students build confidence in themselves, their abilities and possibilities, and their willingness to take risks in order to discover their untapped creative potential.

As it turned out, the previous year, Carl had the unusual experience of teaching the same group of students for four consecutive years, from Level 2 through Level 5. He accompanied them to France, and he helped them prepare for the Advanced Placement exam. By the time of their senior year, 1993-94, Carl and these students



knew each other very well, and they had a very strong relationship, to the point where they could be very honest and open with one another, sharing personal thoughts and experiences. To Carl, this was a powerful experience, and testimony, in a way, to the importance of including personal growth as a component of his teaching and of students' learning French. Carl also applied these concepts to his work with students in other classes.

In recent years, Carl had begun traveling regularly to the province of Québec, particularly to Montréal, where he met people and made friends, expanding his circle of French-speaking relationships, his cultural understanding, his personal confidence, and his abilities in French. In fact, during the time of this study, Carl was in the process of implementing a special curriculum on Québec for the two 10R classes that he taught. The content was closely coordinated with the regular departmental curriculum and the 10R textbook. The culmination was to be a bus trip to Montréal for a long weekend in the spring, including a homestay experience. This course would give the students who would normally not be able to go on the exchange program to France an opportunity for a cultural and communicative experience in French.

This curriculum innovation for the 10Rs represented, too, Carl's initiative to break down the stigma associated with the Regents track. He wanted to show that students in this track were just as capable of learning language as those in the Honors track, if given the opportunities and the support.

Carl's colleagues in the Foreign Language Department, especially fellow French teachers Chuck and June, were important influences in his work. Through his involvement in extra-curricular activities with students, Chuck had influenced Carl to do more of such activities himself. June, with her extensive experience in France and her fluency in French, motivated Carl to further his own expertise in these areas. Also, Carl and Chuck started the exchange program. Together, all three worked closely together on the exchange program with France, sharing responsibilities from year to year. Carl and June collaborated on the Level 4 and 5 curricula, and shared a commitment to communication in language teaching. In contrast, Chuck favored an emphasis on accuracy. Despite these differences in views, they had a cooperative relationship grounded in a common commitment to students and their success in the language program.

The school administration was supportive of the Department program and efforts, although Carl felt this support to be somewhat distant and detached, in that administrators did not take an active interest in innovative educational practices, or in teachers. Carl felt that he had to constantly take the initiative to keep them informed. In large part, he attributed this to some administrators' "not seeing the value of second language study" and "that we are not seen as a viable course of study in the [high school] curriculum" (Bio 3:7).





### The Situation

During this study, Carl put into practice two initiatives, one anticipated before the school year began--the Québec curriculum for the 10R class, and the other a spontaneous decision to change the Level 5 curriculum from a textbook to "the rich tradition of France." These initiatives were similar in that both portrayed central elements in Carl's conception of teaching French in this school.

First, to situate these two initiatives within the overall language program, the 10R was the second year in the Regents Track, while Level 5 was the last year in the Honors Track. The 10R class was pointed toward the Regents examination at the end of Level 3, their junior year. The Level 5 curriculum culminated in the exchange program, the Advanced Placement examination, or the University in High School credits, depending on the option students had chosen.

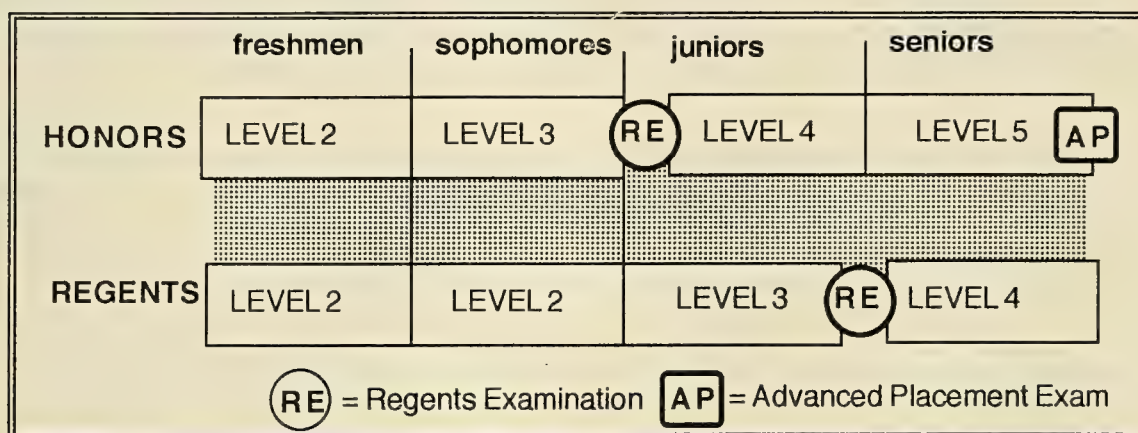


Figure 24: Tracks

The content for Levels 1-3 was that of the three books in the Harcourt Brace Jovanovich series for French (*Nouveaux Copains*, *Nous les Jeunes*, *Notre Monde*). When students completed Book 3, they took the Regents exam, prepared and administered by the Department, following the state guidelines. The Honors track completed the series as sophomores, whereas the Regents track did so as juniors, taking two years to complete book 2 in the series. In Level 4, Honors juniors and Regents seniors were mixed together, and in Level 5, the class was exclusively seniors. The content for Levels 4 and 5 centered on France, and the curriculum was co-developed by Carl and June, who were not bound to any particular textbook or guidelines, except for the requirements of the Advanced Placement exam.

The two changes that Carl made fit within this curriculum.

### The Québec Curriculum

From his recent trips to Québec and Montréal, Carl had established friendships and connections there. He began to see opportunities for helping his students make similar connections, especially since French-speaking Canada was just a three-hour drive away. Before the school year, he began making preparations for incorporating a trip to Québec and a homestay into the 10R curriculum.



The 10R class were sophomores in their second year of French in the Regents track, the so-called "slower-paced learners" (Bio 2:18). In middle school, they had completed the book, *Nouveaux Copains*, the first of the three-book textbook series that constituted the core curriculum in French. As freshmen, they had completed the first part of book two, *Nous Les Jeunes*, which they were to finish in this, their sophomore year. Since the first half of the curriculum was review, Carl decided that he could develop units that would both review the required material, and present new material on Québec.

This is what he set out to do in September at the beginning of the term. Each week, he wrote out his units by hand, photocopied and distributed them to students along with photocopied excerpts of published materials he had collected (and continued to collect) from trips to Montréal. Creating curriculum was a passion of Carl's, and the additional time and effort didn't bother him. He preferred to write curriculum:

I noticed that when I have to rely on a book, I'm less happy. I've noticed it especially in writing the tenth grade curriculum, the French 2 curriculum, I really like writing curriculum. It's a lot of work, but I enjoy the results that we're getting out of doing this. (Curric 2:1)

The motivations behind Carl's curriculum innovation stemmed from a number of sources, related to his intentions for students and to his own experiences and changed outlook. Here, he outlined his motivations in some detail:

Yeah, I think this has been gradual, but a lot a function of my own personal growth. I don't know what else it would be if it weren't for that. I think a lot of my willingness to be risky, and to take chances. It would have been very easy to just, you know, do my job every day. Teach the classes, and say good bye. But it's been personally rewarding to take those risks, and sometimes, not have such great results, and then pick myself up, and try it again. I think that's been a really valuable lesson, to just keep at it, and see. Well, this is how I did it last year. How can I do it a little better this year? Or, how can I do it differently this year? So that, if many people's lives are affected in a positive way, it's possible.

For example, that's why I spoke with a travel agent last night about initiating a homestay in Québec in May, and having the sophomores go up, and giving them an experience other than the classroom, where they can actually see the things that they really did. See the things that they studied.

I kind of try to do one or two new things every year. I'm constantly revising curriculum, so that's not a problem. It's like, "OK now you're doing this, but what can you do to draw the students even closer to the studies, for them to see the value?" The value, I think, comes in the possibility of creating friendships. Actually living what I've been talking about, or what they've been learning. I know a lot of these students, especially those I have as sophomores--I have fifty--if four or five are able, well maybe five or ten are able to go to France, it's wonderful. But the possibility of taking two busloads of them to Québec, it's something I know wouldn't happen, given their own initiative. Of the current two classes, of fifty, I would say maybe four or five have been up there with their families. So, at the very least, they'll have great memories. At the very most, they might be able to create a friendship. Or they might gain an appreciation of an area beyond this zip code.

And if they never speak French again in their lives, and they say, "Wow, you know, I remember I had a really good time when I was in high school, and we went up to Montreal. Let's take the family up to Montreal. Let's go up there for the weekend." That it gets them beyond what they consider as being safe. Safe is home. Safe is this school. Safe is this community. That they can experience life more fully, the more experiences they have. (Bio 3:10)

As far as students were concerned, then, Carl was interested in making the French relevant to them, by giving them the opportunity to use it with native speakers in





Québec through travel and the homestay experience. This, in his view, would open their eyes to the possibility of returning to Canada for a visit later on in their lives. Or better yet, they might even be able to make new friends there. At the very least, they would be in a new environment, out of the safe, known world. And, the seeds of possibilities of living their lives in different ways would be planted. As students in the Regents track, the trip to Québec represented an opportunity to travel abroad that they might not otherwise have.

As for Carl, creating this new course allowed him to connect his own experiences in Québec to the classroom. He explained this connection:

It's come out a lot of personal growth that I have done. I think... It's perfect. This is really interesting. It's great that you've come, because it really...what goes on in my classroom is a perfect reflection of my life. It's really fascinating that now I would be so heavily into Québec studies, and it's only because I personally have given myself the opportunity to enjoy Québec. You know what I'm saying? You know, that I go up to Québec four or five times a year now. I'm getting to know Québec better, and it's only three hours away. They even speak French there. So, now it's like, "Hmm you've been teaching all these years, and only in the last couple years have you actually been giving yourself the opportunity to go there." Isn't it interesting that now I'm creating curriculum around Québec? (Curric 2:18)

These connections were not exclusively the cultural and linguistic knowledge he gained, but more important--for Carl, the processes of taking risks, opening oneself up to new possibilities, trusting in himself, all part of what he called personal growth.

Seven or eight years ago, there's no way I would go up there alone, by myself, for a weekend. It's just not something I would have done. It comes out of our always--here I go to enlightenment land--it's out of our ever growing sense of self. Trust. I trust that I can go up there and enjoy myself and have a good time. I trust that I can create a curriculum out of what I've learned about being there, that's totally something that I've done. That I don't need to have a book any more. I trust that I will make a ton of mistakes, and that there are always going to be better ways to do things, but this is something that I can put my heart into, that I'm totally committed to. And that if I want to make up a reading comp thing that looks like this (holds up his Québec lesson papers), then it's OK. I can do it. If I like it, that's great. Maybe next year, it'll even look better. It's kind of a neat... It goes back to what we talked about way in the beginning, that it's so much about the teacher's willingness to risk. Willingness to get out there and say, "Wow guys this is something I really enjoyed, I had fun with. If I had fun with it, I wonder if maybe you can even have as much fun as I had." (Curric 2:18)

In addition to these motivations, Carl harbored another: to show others in the Department that the R students could learn languages just as well as the students in the Honors track:

When I can hear them saying, *Je suis allé à la ronde, Je me suis amusé, Ça m'a plu*--all those expressions are really cool for kids in tenth grade, who are not supposed to be quote-unquote, "that bright." My goal is, my ulterior motive, is disprove that theory that these kids will never be as good as those 2Rs, who are completing the course this year. (Curric 1:14)

The emphasis on using language for communication and the motivation engendered by the Québec experience would provide students with the needed impetus to improve their French, as Carl saw it.



The diagram below summarizes Carl's intentions:

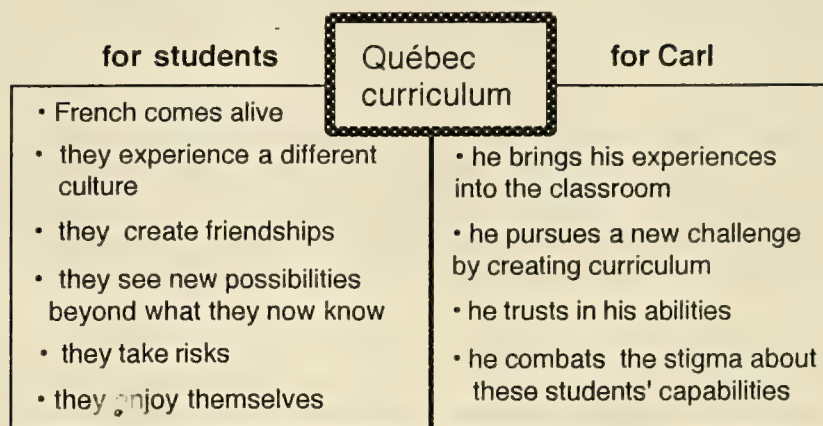


Figure 25: Intentions for Québec Curriculum

### ***The Level 5 Change in Curriculum***

This change occurred in late October in the Level 5 class. Carl decided to drop a textbook that he had especially chosen for this class, *Allons Voir*, a text published by Heinle & Heinle focusing on France and the Francophone world. He replaced this with a curriculum design of his own based on his conception of "the rich tradition of France" (Curric 2:2).

This class consisted of 15 seniors, 6 of whom planned to travel to France in the spring on the exchange program. A few, 4 or 5, planned to take the Advanced Placement examination at the end of the school year, and the rest were enrolled in the University in High School program. The Level 5 curriculum needed to address French culture, because of the exchange program. It also needed to address students' proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing--the cornerstones of the Advanced Placement exam.

Beyond these content emphases, Carl also felt obliged to set a certain learning atmosphere for this class:

I think to establish the atmosphere that this is clearly an advanced level course, that this is clearly...that the fifth year course is clearly the equivalent of a third year college course, and to inspire them to be accountable to a university setting. (Curric 1:8)

This also included "speaking French almost exclusively in class" and doing "college-level" work.

The previous summer, Carl had attended a four-week course that affected his curriculum decisions for the Level 5 course.

Most recently, I did the National Endowment for the Humanities fellowship with 29 other teachers from around the country at Old Dominion in Norfolk. That was a month this summer, which was absolutely fascinating. We studied Francophone language and literature, so it was anything outside France. So we spent a week in each region, a week in North Africa, a week in West Africa, a week in the Caribbean, and a week in Québec. (Bio 2:12)

While there, one of his fellow participants recommended *Allons Voir* to Carl.





The reason that I chose it was that it had segments about *La Francophonie* in it. In other words, when it talked about foods, it talked about foods in Senegal. When it talks about housing, it talks about housing in Cameroon. So I thought that in Fifth Year, it might be a neat idea for them to see that French is spoken, French is studied in areas other than France.

(Curric 3:6)

This text was indeed a college-level book, with an audience of young adults. It offered an examination of various aspects of contemporary French culture, such as gastronomy, housing, leisure activities, education, and contrasts these with the same themes in other Francophone countries, such as Senegal, Québec, Switzerland, Algeria, and Martinique. Throughout, there was a consistent emphasis on development of the four skills, and on communicative use of French.

This text appeared to fit the bill for the Level 5 class. The first unit in the book addressed gastronomy and cuisine, which the class had nearly completed. The next unit was on housing. However, as the early weeks progressed, Carl had grown dissatisfied with the way things were going. He found that the students, although they were doing the required work, lacked a certain spontaneity in their use of French. They were overly concerned with accuracy. Prior to the changeover, he had offered this description and analysis of the situation:

The Honors kids. Twelfth grade. They're very, very linear. Really--this group is a lot different than the group I had last year. It is just a class, I don't know, maybe it was something in the water, or something. But they're just very, very... We do these picture stories this week. Tell me the story in French. They're just talking, and: "See if you can use some of the things we've been talking about, and just let 'er rip!" And...They're real correct. They're not interesting. They're not full of rich vocabulary. And there's not a lot of risk-taking here.

This comes from a system of education, I think, in this country where grades are more important than content. That for some people the love for the language is overshadowed by the importance of doing it right. In languages, I clearly believe that one of the greatest gifts of learning a second language is the gift of: it's totally OK to make mistakes. It's by mistakes that we end up learning even more. That's my theme with these kids this year. (Curric 1:14)

In this early analysis, Carl surfaced his conviction of the importance of mistakes and risk-taking in language learning. To Carl, students' preoccupation with being correct dulled, confined, and stifled their self-expression in French. His first tendency was to lay the blame at the feet of the educational system which had inculcated this emphasis on getting things right for good grades. He also alluded to their previous language learning classes where this was what happened. Carl's solution at this time was to attempt to drive home his message on mistakes:

This is what I love about teaching now. It's a great lesson in, "So you forget all the French you've learned. When you're twenty-seven years old, and you don't remember any French... I remember when I was in high school and I was learning French, that what I took out of that class was: I'm going to make mistakes. I'm going to fall down and I'm going to get back up again, and try it again, and who cares? I'm not going to judge myself so harshly the next time."

...

That's the speech that I often give to them. And they're getting another one on Monday. It's just like, "Loosen up. Let it go. Just go!" Again, you know, some of them will--who knows--they might get it, and they might not. (Curric 1:14)

After this statement, however, Carl reconsidered. Over the weekend, taking stock of the situation, he decided to propose to the class that they change the course content. He arrived at this decision by reflecting on his priorities for this course and these students and then matching this with a list of his own priorities regarding



French and its role in his life. He shared this list with the students the following week, and together they decided to drop the textbook and work on other themes.

Carl's starting point was his own relationship with French:

The weekend, when I made that decision, I went home and I said, "If I were an upper level advanced student of French, what are some things that I would like?" Or myself: "What is it about French that is attractive to me?" So, I kind of made a list. I wrote down films. I wrote down some of the novels I've read, and things like that. (Curric 2:1)

It's very much what I enjoy about French, and just the thoughts that came to mind. It was personal contact--the creation of friendships, how I enjoy film, how I enjoy theater, my interest in reading and literature, and I think cuisine was on the bottom--it wouldn't necessarily fall in that order. It was just a simple list. (Curric 3:2)

His choices turned on general themes that in and of themselves could be seen as universals, that is to say, themes relevant to almost any modern language or culture: friendships, literature, film, theater, cuisine, opera, and the like. In Carl's conception of French, these themes were in fact grounded in particular French film, novel, or play. Carl's enjoyment of these themes, however, went beyond an association with French. He enjoyed these cultural themes in general as much as he did in French. For example, Carl had a passion for opera that was not specifically linked to France or to French culture, but rather transcended it.

The personal list was linked directly to what Carl could share with his students. By tying themes to his personal experiences and passions, he reasoned that it would be easier for him:

I figured that by my taking a look at myself and what I enjoy about French, it would be a lot easier for me to share it with them, and that if it's something that I enjoy in each of those different realms, first of all, it would be easier for me to share with them. Easier in the sense of things I'm more familiar with. Since the themes are so general--we have themes of film, and we have themes of opera, and we have themes of literature, and drama, and even cuisine--these are the themes in which the French are very rich in tradition. It's something that they can actually, hopefully, enjoy and use in the future. (Curric 3:3)

The "rich tradition" of France served as the organizing principle for these themes, which was the way that Carl described the content of these themes.

The contrast with the contents of *Allons Voir* was striking:

It was really interesting, because this was a program that was recommended to me as being very good, and it really talked more about the Francophone world than just France, which was interesting to me, since I studied in Old Dominion this summer. But I found, as we were doing it, I was losing a lot of me in it. I was losing a lot of creativity, things that I had normally done with these kids. (Curric 3:1)

Carl was "losing a lot of me" in this text, losing creativity, and the activities he normally did with students. Even though the content was interesting and compelling, Carl did not have a personal connection to this material. This was an important statement, for Carl needed that personal investment, attachment, or relationship with the content in order to feel right about teaching it.

Moreover, Carl saw that the content in the text really didn't apply to all students in the Level 5 course, just the six planning to go to France.

When you're studying small c culture, themes like cuisine, themes like lodging, themes like leisure activities, I knew six of them were going to France. I knew that they would know a lot by studying the unit on cooking and foods. They're going to be much better prepared for when





they actually go to France. But only six of fifteen are going to France. So, if we're going to do the second unit on lodging, six out of fifteen would know a lot about what French homes are like, the idea of the home as a castle, and all of that--they would clearly understand that. They would understand about how more French live in apartments, and the idea of space, and all that. That's great for going to France. It's just more knowledge for them to take with them when they go. But what about the other nine in the class who aren't going? Is it going to be useful for them to know about statistics about apartments, and statistics about what percentage of French people live in apartments, what percent live in homes, how many rent, how many don't rent. (sighs in exasperation) You know? (Curric 3:7)

Once he drew up the list, another consideration came into play. Ultimately, he saw the text as very "content-oriented," largely because it was missing the kind of personal connection he needed, both for himself and the students. Specifically, Carl was looking for content that could open doors to personal growth:

Well, my whole idea, thematically, in doing it--and when I made the original list--was looking at the rich tradition of France. We talked about its--it was interesting, because it has a very rich tradition in cuisine. The French have a rich tradition in literature, and less rich in other areas, you know, in music. But there are some real highlights that the French have produced that are worth doing, I think. Interestingly enough, and this will be good--even with the movie that we're doing--we'll be able to talk more about how they feel about things. This is again what I talked to you about before, that...What is it that they're really going to take with them at the end of their senior year? If it's French, that's phenomenal, but will it be a better sense of self? Will it be improved self-concept? Will it be any of those things, too? I think, particularly in the works we're doing, we can get into discussions about things like that, whereas talking about food and talking about housing didn't really lend themselves to things that I think seniors can do. That they can get into a little more analytical look at things, rather than superficial knowledge. (Curric 2:2)

A "better sense of self" and "improved self-concept": this was the outcome that Carl sought through French. Through their study of a particular film they could explore the connections to their lives. This, in Carl's mind, was just as important as any French they might learn, if not moreso. There needed to be this kind of immediacy in the material, this kind of potential, something that could be discussed on a personal level, not just superficial knowledge. The key here was Carl's conception of this kind of material. He needed to see this kind of potential in it for himself. The material needed to have more of a "me" dimension for Carl.

In addition, by choosing these general themes, Carl was encouraging students to take up an independent interest in them, one that they could potentially pursue later in life, such as picking a French film at the video store. Such connections were also part of the personal growth theme. Carl stated this clearly when he described the class discussion that followed his proposing the theme of opera:

It was interesting, because I'm thinking of doing Carmen with them. Again, this is an area--it's funny--when I mentioned Carmen, they said, "Ooh, Opera." I said, "What do you think it is that you don't...aren't interested in?" "Oh, we just don't like it." "Well, why is it that you don't like it? Could it be because you don't know anything about it?" I think a lot of times, we prejudge, they prejudge things because of their own ignorance. I don't mean ignorance in that sense, I just mean ignorance because they don't know anything about it. (Curric 2:2)

Opera was very interesting. I said, "I know several French operas. When I went to my very first opera, I didn't have a very good experience of it." They said, "Why?" I said, "Because I had no concept of what opera was. I remember La Traviata in Caen, when I was there. I just didn't know anything about it." We had a nice little discussion about how we have a tendency to make things wrong or bad out of our own ignorance, out of not knowing about that. I said, "Maybe, if just by doing Carmen this year, you gain a little bit more appreciation of what opera



is, maybe sometime you'll go see another opera. It might not be a French opera, but maybe just out of the initiation that we'll do in class this year, you'll be a little bit more interested in that, for your life in the future." (Curric 3:2) —

This was a clear instance of Carl's intended outcomes involving personal growth. It wasn't just the opera Carmen, or the French that students would learn by studying it. It was the possibility of admitting opera into their lives--opera of any kind. More precisely, it was about confronting and overcoming ignorance and prejudice, barriers that students constructed in their lives. In fact, Carl framed this outcome as just that: "breaking down barriers" (Obs 1:10).

As for the Advanced Placement examination requirements, these really did not enter into Carl's thinking, since they did not depend on any content areas per se, but rather on practice in listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

I think the nice thing about AP is whatever we do to increase their speaking, to increase their comprehension, whatever way we do it is fine. There is no one set curriculum. (Curric 2:3)

Having clarified these changes in content and outcomes, Carl then consulted with June before presenting his thinking to the students. Together, they reviewed *Allons Voir*, and June declared that much of the material could be included in the Level 4 curriculum.

We talked about the paucity of work they do in literature, or reading anything of length. With her, it was largely about having all these years of French and not reading any great works, or not having any grounding in those areas [on the list] I just mentioned.

... She also took a look at the textbook that I was using with Francophone culture, and as she looked at it, she said, "This is a lot of material that I'm working on in Level 4, and I think a lot of this work can be put into the Level 4 program. Because it's a lot about preparing them to go to France." So the whole idea of lodging and cuisine and leisure time activities work very well into the Level 4 program. So I think that she saw also that there was a lot more that she could do in the Level 4 program, as far as small c culture. There's a lot in that program. A book that we all like to do, *The Little Prince* for example, we could do in Fifth Year, and she could do a lot more small c culture in the Fourth. So, I have a feeling that *The Little Prince* will go back to being a Fifth Year book. It's just a nice book to end with, with seniors. (Curric 3:8)

To Carl and June, the contrast with Level 4 showed that Level 5 could involve more literature or "great works," and grounding in the themes of the "rich tradition of France." In a way, this discussion with June seemed to reinforce what the content of Level 5 needed to be, in terms of the overall language program.

Thus armed, Carl went into the Level 5 class and presented his thinking to the students. He shared his list and spoke to students about the relevance of French to his life. He asked them whether they could see such possibilities in their own lives:

That's when I took it [the list] into them, and I talked to them one day. That was when I was on the verge of making the shift, but I wanted to see what they thought of them.

... I said, "I was thinking about your class, and I was thinking about what we're currently doing. This is not something I typically do in the middle of the year, but I want to see what you think. I was thinking about my reasons for studying French, the reasons why I still enjoy it after all these years. These are the things I enjoy about learning French. What do you think about these things? Can you see that my enjoyment of French comes out of the language, but underneath all the aspects of language are these sub-topics, these sub-themes. These are what they are. Do you see how I can enjoy French beyond the study of language?" They said, "Yes we can."





And I asked them, "Is there anything on this list that could apply to you? If you could put yourself in my place, if you had been studying French for twenty-five years, what might be interesting to you?" They mentioned things like--some of them are athletic--and they would mention things like sports, and things like that. Then, we talked about, "Well of all these things, where would you like to go with it? Where would you like to improve? In what areas do you find yourself not having a lot of knowledge?" They clearly mentioned opera. They've only read one book. (Curric 2:4)

Then, Carl and the students decided on themes they wanted to cover. They dropped the textbook and began straight-away with a film, *Au Revoir Les Enfants*. From the film, they read a play, *Le Fantôme de l'Opéra*, and they went on to other topics that fit within the "rich tradition of France."

It's worth noting here that Carl portrayed French through his own lifetime experiences with it, through his relationships with it. He presented this as a possibility that could easily happen to them, as something they could act on, should they choose to do so.

In making this changeover in Level 5, a number of central elements of Carl's conceptions of French came to the fore. These are summarized in the following illustration:

	content	outcomes	teacher role
BEFORE	textbook with cultural information	cultural information skill building	limited
AFTER	↓ themes from the "rich tradition of France"	↓ personal growth skill building	↓ more of "me"
RESULT	more flexible more personal more than cultural content	more relevance more sharing more involvement	more creativity more sharing more personal

Figure 26: Level 5 Curriculum Change

This particular event not only revealed Carl's conceptions regarding French, it also showed the important role played by his colleague, June. As co-developers of the Level 4 and 5 curricula, she and he consulted about the changeover he was considering before he presented it to students.



## **Summary**

To summarize the situation during this time period,

- Carl was in the process of instituting a curriculum innovation for the 10R class, organized around an actual trip to Québec in the spring.
- The Québec curriculum was Carl's attempt to provide the non-Honors students with a trip abroad, a homestay, and other experiences in a French-speaking culture that they might not otherwise have, so as to "make the language come alive."
- Carl undertook a major curriculum change in the other French course he taught, Level 5. He dropped the textbook and organized a curriculum around "the rich tradition of France" directly grounded in his personal experiences and connections with the French and French culture.
- In both these courses, Carl consciously infused the content and activities with a dimension he called "personal growth," an amalgam of outcomes that included openness to change, risk-taking, willingness to make mistakes in learning, self-confidence and self-esteem, and examination and sharing of personal views and feelings.

Given this situation, let us turn to an examination of Carl Harvey's conception of French.

## **Conceptions of French**

To organize an examination of Carl's conception of French, I will describe in greater detail his views in each of the following dimensions: teacher role, students, content, activities, outcomes, and context. These dimensions are in a dynamic relationship. This framework posits a teacher's conception of subject matter as a dynamic interaction of six dimensions: context, students, teacher roles, content, activities, and outcomes. The teacher's conception of French is thus a function of these interrelated dimensions.

In concrete terms, this means that a teacher defines the French to be learned as part of a perception of his or her role, students, the types of learning activities, and intended outcomes or results, all set within the possibilities and limitations of the school and classroom, and within relationships with colleagues in the Foreign Language Department.

## **Teacher Roles**

Carl's conceptions of his role as French teacher involved the relationships he sought to establish with students and others in the school, primarily his colleagues in the Department. These roles related to Carl's conceptions of himself, students, content, activities, and outcomes. These roles are interconnected, and overlap. In the following descriptions, these overlaps and interconnections will become apparent. Within each of these larger roles, Carl plays other specific roles, detailed below.





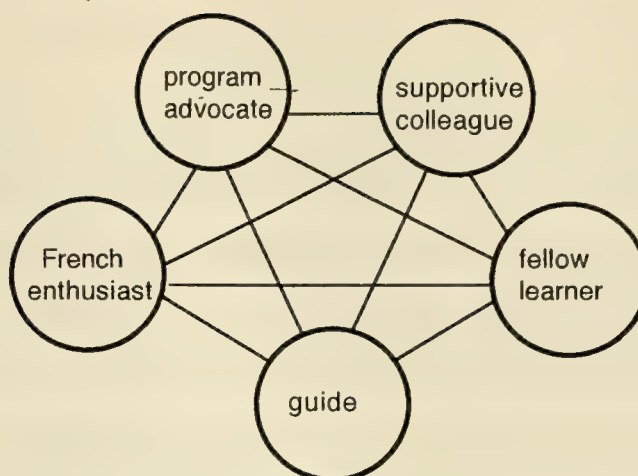


Figure 27: Teacher Roles I

### **Guide**

This role characterized Carl's basic approach to choosing and implementing learning activities, and to relating to students as they participated in them. The essence of this role involved striking a balance between providing direct instruction and opportunities for students to take responsibility for their learning.

In commenting on a class he had just taught, where students were working independently in small groups on summarizing reading they had done, Carl signaled the importance of being the students' guide:

I think particularly with the AP class, with the Fifth Year class, I really noticed the importance of pulling away from being the teacher and being more their guide. So, I'm trying to minimize, continually minimize, my role as the authority figure in front of the classroom. (Obs 3:1)

In this comment, Carl draws a distinction between being a teacher, being an authority figure and being a guide, presenting this role as one that he strove to achieve, as an ongoing priority.

### **Granting Responsibility**

The guide role thus represented a dominant stance that Carl sought to maintain in the classroom. It was essentially about shifting the focus from himself to the students:

... it's about giving them responsibility for their own learning. That they're entirely capable of doing a lot of the things themselves. That they don't need me to stand in front of the room, forty-two minutes a day, five days a week, for them to learn. They can do a lot of the work. I act more like a guide now than as an authority figure in front of the room. (Bio 3:12)

I'm clear about how important it is for them to work together and have fun together and get me out of the front of the room, and the importance of hearing them speak French. (Obs 2:13)

Such a stance necessarily translated into choosing certain kinds of activities, and watching for certain kinds of outcomes:

That's why today, as in every day, they would look at the book just to remember what they had read, and then summarize what they had read with a partner, and have the partner continue the summarization, and then, eventually, have one of them come up to the front of the room and speak on what they read. It really gets me out of it, and gets them using as much French as possible. I think it's been really successful. I noticed people are volunteering, and it's nice to see everyone using the language at once. There are obviously, in any class, varying degrees



of competency, but it's been really nice this week to see them take more control of their learning. That's why we did it this way. (Obs 3:1)

### *Trusting*

By according students responsibility through certain kinds of activities, the guide role also called for other practices and dispositions on Carl's part. An essential attitude was trust.

It doesn't take a lot of work. It's just like, "This is my request. How about we do it this way? What do you think? How do you want to handle this?" You know, the kids are--while I'm listening to these dialogues in the front of the room this week, in the seven-minute things that I talked to you about earlier--they're working on scripts to create a video tape. So I just let them go. They do their work, and it's cool. It's because of trust, I think. (Bio 3:12)

Trust was linked to two key learning outcomes: "having fun" and "learning French":

This is French, and they can enjoy their experience of learning French. What do I have to do so that, one, they learn French, and that their experience of French is enjoyable, and profitable, and that they graduate from these hallowed halls with an interest in the language, if possible, and some proficiency in the language.

...  
When I'm not thinking so much about it, it happens. I mean, today they were doing both. They were showing me that they could speak French, better than they could a month ago, clearly. And, from the energy level I saw, they were having fun, and they were working on these silly Real World scripts. It was great. I trusted them. I trusted them enough that I can be over here, sitting and listening to two, while twenty-two others are over there. So, it's a big issue for me, that I can let go of control, and trust them to create some great stuff.  
(Obs 2:14)

Trust involved more than Carl's decision to minimize his own authority and presence to maximize students' involvement in learning activities. It also involved trusting their views on their learning experience and actually inviting these views. In other words, he needed to trust their comments on his teaching.

I think lately I spend a lot more time with "Hi, how's it going?" Or asking them, "What do you think you'd like to do about this area we're doing now?" I think getting them to be a lot more personally involved in decisions in class. Asking them at least once a week, "What do think of how class is going?" And that they can answer honestly. It's a lot of that stuff. In the beginning of my career, there's no way I would have ever asked them, "So what do you think of French after two weeks?" There's no way. (Bio 1:7)

While this was not always easy for Carl to do, but he recognized it as a central dimension to this role.

### *Balancing Fun and French*

At one point, Carl referred to managing the balance between these two outcomes as "a tightrope walk." In the following description of writing activities for the Level 5 class, he shows how he gives the students the responsibility of doing the additional writing that they will need to do well on the AP exam through optional re-writes:

C: . . . They write a page each evening about the film, and I correct every single paper, write every single correction, and hand it back. Then, if they wish, they re-write and hand it back again. If they wish.

PM: That's where their effort comes in.

C: See, at the end--like Tuesday before vacation--they're going to write about the film, one paper about the film. They'll be able to take all the corrections, all the papers the night before and look them through. If they've been doing the re-writes, I have a feeling that what they write





on Tuesday will be of higher quality than if they didn't do the re-writes. That's an example of how much responsibility that they're going to accept in all this.

... It's really a tightrope walk, because if I go in there with my intention on them doing well on an AP, and forget the commitment that I have to them enjoying the study of the language and its culture, then I think something will be lost. And vice versa. I think I can maintain a high level of linguistic competency with a high level of cultural content. I think it's possible. There are times that that tightrope kind of moves. It's a great experience for me to see if I can keep the interest level high, and the achievement level high. (Curric 3:13)

Here, Carl made it clear that his teaching "intention" acted as a critical fulcrum in his ability to leverage the balance of both high interest and high achievement. He had to maintain his fundamental purpose uppermost in his mind, shifting back and forth as required. Throughout the interviews, Carl constantly voiced the question, "What is my purpose?" (Curric 2:7) as a means of identifying what he needed to be working toward.

In concrete terms, Carl recognized that in order to maintain student interest, he needed to drop his own attachment to students scoring well on the exams. On the other hand, he did have a responsibility to assure that they had the opportunities they needed to prepare for success on the exams. There were times that students had to do the necessary work, and Carl had to point this out to them.

There are clearly days I mean business. You know, there are clearly days when I come in and I'm not maybe as light as I am, I mean, that area. They're real clear there is value in what you're doing. There is value in studying French. (Obs 2:8)

And, in Carl's view, students understood this and responded accordingly.

I think they know: there's a time to have a good time, and there's a time that we get down to work. (Obs 3:10)

### *Setting the Atmosphere*

Part of the balancing act Carl had created for himself involved the tone or atmosphere in class. Carl clearly saw it as his role to create an atmosphere in the classroom where mistakes and self-expression were encouraged:

I think it's important at every level to develop the kind of...a sense of self, a sense of confidence, first in speaking the language. If I can't provide an atmosphere--let me say, it's important for me to provide an atmosphere where they can feel free to express themselves. I think that's what I was alluding to at the last session. That it's totally OK to get up in front of this room and speak French, and it's totally OK to make a lot of mistakes. If I don't provide that atmosphere, then it's only understandable that they'll sit back, and they won't go for it.

I guess what I'm saying is that if I develop that in the early years, when they first are here in high school, that they're ready for more advanced work when they're seniors. But if these are students that I haven't had before, again, it's them knowing from me, that I am totally accepting of them making mistakes, and getting back up and going for it again. I'm the one who creates that atmosphere in the classroom. (Bio 2:14)

*Again, the idea of a sense of self, a sense of confidence. That, again, is very, very important for me: for them to feel free to make mistakes and just do their best. And if they do make errors, that it's really not that important, that it's totally OK, that that's the best way to learn. (Epilogue: 5/3/96)*

Carl saw the atmosphere as the first step in encouraging students to express themselves, thereby gaining confidence in themselves and their abilities, the key to



developing a sense of self. For this to happen, he had to show students that mistakes were OK.

### *Pointing to New Possibilities*

Carl's role of guide also involved his pointing students to the possibilities beyond enjoying themselves in class and learning French; namely, to the possibilities inherent in personal growth. These were opportunities that he created through learning activities, such as the exchange programs in France and Québec, but also through the way he himself publicly related to the material and how he invited students to engage in it, i.e. making it personal.

I think the general heading for all that might be that they are powerful enough to create their lives any way they choose. That they...it's the whole thing about they deserve to be here. They deserve to have a great life, and travel can be part of it. Creating friendships with people abroad can clearly be part of it. It's great for me to feel as though I can be a conduit to that. (Bio 1:6)

The image of a "conduit" does seem related to Carl's conception of guide, in that he provides a route and a destination which students can, "if they wish," choose.

Carl referred to this dimension of his role as a "vital," which went beyond "just being a French teacher":

I think...last year's senior class was probably the combination of the whole thing, and maybe during one of our sessions, I can show you some of the things that they wrote to me. What was really touching about it was that I know that a lot of these kids are much more interested in...Some of them want to be doctors, a lot of science and math, and they're brilliant in everything that they do. I mean, they're such an easy class to handle last year. But teaching them French really ended up being...it ended up being French, but it ended up being a lot more about the development of character. The development of relationships, and how to get along with people, and things like that. So the neat thing is...They took me out to dinner at the end, or when they wrote in my yearbook, it was...It wasn't so much "thanks about French." They did. But it was a lot about, you know, "Thanks for helping me to get along better with people in my class or with my family." So we did a lot of real, honest sharing, too.

And I do it with these kids, too. It's a lot about participation, you know, "What's going on? You're not willing to participate. What can I do to help you out?" Things like that. It makes my role seem so much more...vital, than just being a French teacher. (Bio 1:6)

In sum, Carl's conception of his role as guide role was related to:

- his conceptions of content: that it was a combination of student interest and enjoyment, student performance in French, and personal growth;
- his conceptions of activities that best fostered student engagement in these content areas, activities that featured student responsibility and Carl's trust in students to take it on, even to the point of providing them input into what goes on in class;
- his conception of students as capable and responsible learners with great creative potential for personal growth.

### *Enthusiast*

In this role, Carl purposefully disclosed his own involvement with the French language and Francophone culture, with personal growth, with being a teacher, and





with the students and their work. Carl frequently used the word "enthusiasm" to describe this involvement.

I am a perfect expression of how those kids will enjoy the class. How I am, the enthusiasm that I show, is a perfect example of what they're going to give back. Over the years, I've noticed that it's because of my enthusiasm and my willingness to accept responsibility for their results that that has indeed happened--that in many cases, the kids have enjoyed the class, that they've decided to go on, that they've been French majors in college. Even if they haven't been French majors in college, just to leave the class feeling good about it--that they had a great experience, that it was fun. (Obs 3:14)

To Carl, showing enthusiasm was very much an intended role. By now, it had become a cultivated and conscious stance that he attempted to convey consistently in class. Over time, he had noticed the importance of the connection between his enthusiasm and students' responses and the results that they achieved.

His "personal growth work", begun in 1989, allowed him to develop the consistency of the enthusiast role that he had not had previously. Carl described his earlier years as enthusiastic, but with an overriding attachment to students' performance in French.

I've always liked it. I've always really enjoyed it. I've always enjoyed coming back to school. I've always enjoyed...teaching French. But I think in the beginning, it was more about how important I saw French is to them. Like, it's real important that you learn French. If you don't learn French, you won't be able to do this, this, this, and this. I think I had real high standards, and real high expectations in the beginning years. And they often didn't quite...I didn't feel like they quite met my expectations. . . . But then, other times they did. You know, I mean...It was kind of... I saw it pretty much as when they came over, or when they came from another class, how maybe...I didn't see that I had much power in changing things. You know, "Well if it weren't for that teacher, you know, he'd be able to do this." I think I did a lot of blaming, and I did a lot of...comparing. And, I didn't have the sense of myself that I do now. (Bio 1:3)

As Carl remembered this time period, his sense of powerlessness resulted in swings of enthusiasm, from highs to lows:

I would have real good days, and real bad days. I'd be real out there, and real enthusiastic. One day. Maybe for a couple days. And then, real matter of fact, by the book. No enthusiasm, no expression another day. So, I was real moody. Real swings...

PM: Ups and downs.

C: Ups and downs.

PM: Depending on what happened in class.

C: Yeah, sometimes class, but mostly outside. You know, things that were going on in my own life. And I didn't realize that I had...that there was anything I could do about it. It was more, The world was doing this to me, rather than I could handle this stuff. So I think...I don't know how true it is for other teachers, but I see now that my ability to handle my life is directly related to how effective I can be in the classroom. (Bio 1:3)

Carl attributed this transformation in attitude to a new-found control over his life outside the school, the result of the "personal work" that he began in 1989. Now, five years later, he had a different outlook:

I think if there's one thing that may be important to know about me and my teaching is when I walk into the classroom, I see that the students are always a perfect mirror for how I'm being. . . . In other words, they will reflect back my interests. They'll reflect back my enthusiasm. They'll reflect back everything that I give them.



I've noticed that with all the work that I've done on myself in recent years, you know, personal work, work that's helped me increase my own self-esteem, and it's directly reflected in my own classes. You know, I've been teaching...this is my twenty-second year teaching, and I've never enjoyed it as much as I do now. It's getting better and better. I think for a general philosophy for me is my students are doing as well as I'm doing. How I do is how they do, not the opposite. I think that for me that would be an overriding theme of my teaching. (Bio 1:3)

In order to help students learn French, Carl had shifted his priority from students to himself. By working on how he was doing, he was able to exert greater control over what and how he showed in class. The more of an enthusiast he was, the more that students engaged in French and the better they performed.

His shift from students to himself was just part of the picture. Carl also diminished his emphasis on student performance in French, and balanced it with emphases of student interest and personal growth. He showed students how he had become a French enthusiast, how his study and proficiency in the language had influenced his life, how French had allowed him to make things happen in his life:

But, I think as time has worn on, I think French is a by-product of a lot of other things. French comes easily when they like what they're doing, when there's an interest developed. If I can show them, you know, how enthusiastic I am about it, and what I see is possible out of it...it may be something like bringing in letters that I get from my friends, or bringing in friends that I've met, or people that I know. Showing them pictures that...you know, "This stuff can actually happen in your life. That we can make this stuff happen if we want to." So I think it's about, "How much are you willing to make happen in your life?" And French...I don't know, it's almost like little...within every French lesson, there's a lot to do with encouragement and motivational strategies that I have. (Bio 1:6)

The changeover incident in the Level 5 class, where Carl presented his list of pursuits in French as a basis for the curriculum was a clear instance of how he brought his personal enthusiasms to his teaching. As he said to students then, "This stuff can happen in your life."

The enthusiast role, in sum, was one in which Carl drew directly from his own passions and interests and consciously injected them into his work with students. His enthusiasm was genuine and long-standing. Now as a result of his personal work, he had harnessed it and could put it to work in the classroom.

### ***Fellow Learner***

In this role, Carl brought his own learning experiences into the classroom and shared them with students. For the most part, these experiences related to certain key themes involving language learning, as well as generalized themes involving learning new things and creating new possibilities. At the heart of this role was Carl's willingness to be honest about his own learning experiences, and on questions or tasks that he was asking of them. In this way, he presented himself as a fellow learner.

As for learning French, Carl saw himself as "in process." He viewed language learning as an ongoing process, seeing that there was always something new to learn:

What I really enjoy about learning French is that it's always a process. I don't...I have yet to meet anyone who's non-native who possesses all the skills and all the proficiency of a native.





That's what I find fascinating about learning French, that there's always something new to learn. Always the possibility for improvement of skills. I'm fortunate to work with a colleague who lived in France for several years, and she speaks wonderful French. It's a real motivation for me to keep going back, and to keep practicing. It's a motivation for me to keep reading, it's a motivation for me to rent films, or watch French language broadcasts, or listen to short-wave radio--anything like that. Any of those things helps me with my proficiency in French, which I think is...can only improve if I keep doing those things. My French is clearly, it's clearly better today than it was a year ago. I think with my willingness to have experiences, both in Québec and in France, it always improves. And what I do personally for myself, when I rent a film, or when I read a book, or anything that I do, really helps. (B 2:9)

Moreover, Carl had accepted his abilities as they were, and no longer compared himself in a negative light to native speakers, or considered himself as "deficient":

I used to look at it as, "Oh I'll never be able to speak French like they do." But now, I don't see it that way at all. I just see it more like, "Oh wow, this is where you are now, and next time you're going to get better, you know." Seeing it more as a process, rather than as being deficient has taken a lot of the onus off my shoulders. You know, "You're just really never going to be any good at this." It's made it a lot more fun lately. (Bio 2:16)

These views about himself as a learner of French were exactly what he passed on to students. When asked about what teaching the Level 5 course demanded of him, Carl answered in terms of learning:

Well, for me, it calls for a lot of extra time in planning and preparation. It calls for me to immediately support them in using the language as much as they possibly can, in taking risks, in being willing to express themselves and make mistakes, in knowing that it's all a process, that they're going to continue to improve daily. (Bio 2:9)

This process, as Carl indicated above, was indeed about learning French. The emphasis on self-expression in the language, on a willingness to take risks, and make mistakes were essential to making progress, bit by bit, day by day.

Such features of the language learning process applied equally to other content emphases, in particular that of personal growth. For Carl, since French in many ways was a by-product of personal growth, other aspects of learning such as taking risks, making mistakes, and an overall attitude of "go for it" or "let 'er rip" were equally valid. As mentioned, these were related to "breaking down barriers", "creating possibilities," exploring "personal feelings" in relation to course content and activities. Carl's role of fellow learner in this respect involved his open sharing with students on these matters as they arose in class.

For example, Carl described what happened to a student in the previous year's Level 5 class, as a result of their work on risk-taking:

One of the greatest things that happened to me last year was one of my female students, out of the work we were doing--and we were doing *L'Etranger* and *Le Petit Prince*, and stuff like that last year--and we were really getting into it. Imagine how you can get into *Le Petit Prince*. We were really getting into it, and we were talking a lot about taking risks and things like that. It was all in the language, but she will probably never be--you know, she'll take some French--but I don't think that's where her primary interest lies. She decided to go to the University of Buffalo, instead of our local community college, out of the work that we did in class. It was so nice to get a letter from her, thanking me for that part of it. . . . The idea of getting out, and taking risks, and being willing to screw up, and make mistakes, and trying things again. That was a beautiful gift for me. Really, really wonderful. I think that's probably kind of how things are evolving. From...there's some kind of relationship there. (Bio 1:12)



This was what personal growth is all about, as Carl envisioned it. His role, as fellow learner, was to share what is going on in his life by talking to students "on a personal level":

I think there's a lot of possibility for growth. Growth can look like linguistic growth, but I think growth can also look like personal growth. . . . I think it's possible for students at senior year in high school to talk a lot more about themselves, and they're more willing to talk about themselves with a linguistic and cultural context. . . . I think I've found that when we can relate, and when I can talk to them on a personal level, what's going on in my life, that they can see value in it beyond it just being French. (Bio 2:14)

This sharing involves his willingness to risk, whether it was his own enjoyment:

. . . it's so much about the teacher's willingness to risk. Willingness to get out there and say, "Wow guys this is something I really enjoyed, I had fun with. If I had fun with it, I wonder if maybe you can even have twenty percent as much fun as I had." (Curric 5:18)

Or his willingness to admit mistakes:

[Proposing the curriculum change to the Level 5 class] was a risk, but I think they need to feel like I'm a human being, too, and that I make mistakes. I said, "I really appreciate how participatory you've been, how willing you've been to contribute, but I don't really feel this great about this. I'm just wondering how you feel." I've been learning the past couple years a lot can be gained out of my being honest with them about what I see, how I feel about it, and being honest and telling them. (Curric 3:11)

Or his willingness to share personal feelings on discussion topics in class:

I think it goes back to what we were talking about earlier: my reason for teaching in the first place. Learning the language, and being able to improve speaking the language, as they are, is just wonderful. What else is possible? What else is possible is that we can share things in a language classroom that oftentimes we can't in others. With my willingness to be open and their willingness to be open, maybe it'll affect...

Oh! I've got a great story about that. When we were discussing Phantom [of the Opera], and the whole idea of hiding behind a mask, and what do we do, what are our perceptions of people when we see them disfigured, or even, disfigured people, what do they do? One of the boys the next day said that he was at a concert in Syracuse and he had seen someone who was disfigured, and it was interesting for him to look at all the people and how they reacted to the disfigurement. What do we human beings do with things like that? How do we see our own personal disfigurements? We just got into a lot of things like that.

I think by my willingness to tell them what I do to hide myself away really opened them up, and I think we're a lot...I think there's a degree of closeness that was developed. If that's possible within the framework of the classroom, I'm all for it. (Obs 2:8)

While Carl did state that his willingness to be open could encourage students to do likewise, it was more than a simple pedagogical strategy on his part. It was rather his attempt to forge a bond between him and the students, a "closeness" that would permit the kind of sharing that fostered personal growth. In this regard, Carl stepped outside a guide role, an enthusiast role, and he placed himself alongside the students, as a fellow learner. In this instance, a fellow learner of life.

*[This] is very, very important to me. The importance of forging a bond that permits this kind of sharing, that fosters personal growth--the learner of life aspect--is very important to me. (Epilogue: 5/3/96)*

Learning was more than weighty sharing. More often, it was fun. It was enjoyable. It was laughing. Learning did not need to be a difficult, somber business about correct answers, as Carl saw it. To the contrary, it was about self-expression,





communication on topics of interest in an atmosphere where mistakes were OK, and where fun and laughing were encouraged. Carl laughed alongside.

I support them in being silly. I support them in being outrageous in these, because it's just so refreshing. The day we show them [student video productions], they're so excited, and we're all laughing. It's just so nuts to see in a school! There's not a lot of laughing that goes on, I don't think, in school. I just... I think it's important to have some fun, too. (Obs 2:12)

This view, too, was reinforced and clarified through Carl's personal work. His change in attitude toward his teaching and toward students originated with a similar change in outlook on his own life:

Maybe it's a lot about...not taking things so seriously any more. It's like, "Give me a break!" That it's OK to relax with things, to have fun with things. You know, things do always come up. Whether it be in school, or whether it be in life. (Bio 1:5)

I didn't have to make things as hard as I used to. Or...my standards were really pretty, pretty out there, pretty high. When I started doing some more personal work, I think it was a process of becoming a little more gentle with myself. Having a little bit more fun, enjoying things a little bit more than I had in the past. Now, it's a lot better now. (Bio 2:17)

Carl contrasted his present outlook with that of five years ago, prior to his personal work:

Carl five years ago was, "It's wonderful for you to be able to learn French. I'm really glad that when you graduate from this school, you will have experienced French culture, that hopefully, some time in your life, you'll be able to experience French. Whether you study it in college, whether you're able to travel there, whether you're able to go to Canada--that's great." Now, French happens as a function of the relationships, of the friendships, of everything. French is like a by-product now of what I'm attempting to create. The idea of enjoying it, that life doesn't have to be so hard, that you can have some fun. It doesn't have to be hard.

Again, it's me. It's me seeing that. If I hadn't gotten that out of the work I've done with myself, then I wouldn't have been able to at least begin to express that to the students. (Bio 3:13)

When asked about his own trips to Québec and the connection to his development of the Québec curriculum for the 10R class, Carl was quite clear:

It's right where my life is. It's just a microcosm of my life. It's so fascinating. It really is. Now I get that it always has been. It really is. It's a fascinating little journey. Why else would I be telling these kids to get out there: let it go, take a risk, have fun. It's exactly what I'm telling myself. I couldn't say it to them unless it was about me as well. (Curric 2:20)

As a fellow learner, then, Carl explicitly drew from his own experiences as a learner of French, Francophone culture, and of personal growth. He brought these experiences into the classroom through honest sharing of his views, and of what he believed essential about the process of learning languages and learning in general: taking risks, making mistakes, expressing yourself, enjoying yourself with others while you work.

### ***Supportive Colleague***

This role characterized the manner in which Carl related to the other teachers in the Foreign Language Department, particularly to his two long-time colleagues in the French program, June and Chuck. He had been the Department Chair since 1979, and he now characterized his relationship with them as "pretty much among equals" (Curric 2:15). Together, they were responsible for the general curriculum in French for Levels 1 to 5, and they collaborated on the exchange program in France, the



centerpiece of the curriculum in Levels 4 and 5. The curriculum for Levels 1 to 3 consisted of the Harcourt Brace Jovanovich series, with clearly defined expectations for each of the two tracks, Honors and Regents. As a supportive colleague, Carl's primary task was to bolster the collaboration among the three of them to assure a strong French program.

Tellingly, when Carl was asked to describe the strengths and weaknesses of the French program, he described the teachers:

I would say strengths are probably the teachers' interest in the students as learners and as young people, and what we do to support them in being successful. I would say the teachers' background in second language acquisition, and strong background--social and academic background, and their interest in creating a viable program that reflects communication, and that reflects something that the students can really use in high school. I would say the curriculum is strong. It's very communicatively based.

I would say that a weakness would be that we don't always agree on how the curriculum should be approached. There's a difference in philosophies. One might be more grammatically based, and the others might be more communicatively based. (Curric 2:10)

In this description, Carl named a key feature of his role: managing agreement and disagreement. All three teachers agreed on the overall features of the curriculum and shared an interest in students and their success in the language program. Carl favored the communicative approach to the curriculum, as did June, while Chuck believed in a grammatical approach.

Over time, Carl had learned that he had to accept the differences in views, that he could not force agreement upon colleagues.

There were years when I tried to push that way, when I kind of tried to wield power that I didn't actually have. That was kind of tough. That's when we had a real, I think, a real division for a while, where there were people who were very, very staunch--this is very interesting--strongly believed in one school of thought. People who were very communicatively based, who wanted the curriculum to roll that way, and others who were more grammatically based, who wanted it to roll that way. I kind of would have liked to have seen it in a particular way. There were times that I kind of tried to impose it, until I kind of learned that that's not the way you get along with people.

...

For me, it was very helpful. Now, we're just more... Everyone does things very much the same and very much differently. We all approach things in a very, very different way. And there are a lot of things that we do that are very similar. Now, it's more like--when we have a meeting--"Tell me something that's going on in your class that you find really successful, that you'd like to share with everyone." Or, I will just throw out a general question: "How much French are you speaking?" "How much Spanish are you speaking every day in class?" "Do you want to talk about it?" So we chat, and we disagree, and we agree, but it's pretty much among equals. (Curric 2:15)

Carl now viewed the relationship among the French teachers as one where each offered "gifts" to the others, without necessarily being aware of doing so. He said that both Chuck and June came to him for teaching ideas, especially for making activities communicative. He, in turn, went to Chuck for clarification on linguistic or grammatical points in French, and to June for her knowledge of cultural and communicative aspects of French. With June, of course, Carl had developed the advanced level curriculum, and she and he agreed on the communicative approach.

It's an interesting process, and now that I see that we have really great gifts for each other, rather than being separate entities, it's really helped improve things. Like I mentioned earlier, a





couple of years ago, I would have looked at my relationship with June--who speaks French fluently--as being, "Oh I'll never speak French as well as she does. What am I going to do?" Now, it's just like, "Well I can gain a lot from her knowledge." I can gain a lot out of Chuck's relationship with students, how well he gets along with them, and how it's OK for me to get out there, too, and do things other than teaching French. So I think we're seeing--I'd like to think that we're seeing--the gifts we are to each other, rather than the competitive nature that may be inherent in all of us. (Bio 3:11)

In the end, Carl's role of supportive colleague was to help other teachers become fully involved in the language program. He talked about how Chuck was considering teaching an advanced level course the following year, after not having done so for many years. To Carl, this was an initiative that he planned to fully support.

I would totally support him in doing that. . . . Because I think he needs to feel important. All of us need to feel like we're an important part of the workings of the department. I think because of how June and I have worked, the closeness that we developed in many ways, he kind of felt left out, and not as important. Now, although he clearly wants to be a guidance counselor--that is his clear direction--I think now he's feeling much more willing, because of some of the shifts she and I have made to include him more, more willing to take an upper-level course again. (Obs 1:16)

In terms of Carl's own conception of French and teaching French, the role that colleagues exerted was considerable. June and Chuck offered similar yet distinct views on the nature of language and language learning, and Carl had to accommodate and support both. In so doing, his own conceptions became stronger, especially regarding the importance of communication over accuracy. At the same time, he came to appreciate what colleagues had to offer each other, despite their differences.

### ***Program Advocate***

As Department Chair, Carl saw himself as "very much an advocate for the program" (Curric 2:15), in the school and in the community. In very simple terms, this meant achieving and maintaining high enrollments in language courses, especially beyond Level 3, the requirement for the Regents Diploma.

The Department had managed to do just that, according to outside criteria for success:

Strengths of the program: we get results, positive results, in the eyes of the state, in the eyes of the Advanced Placement. We like the number of students enrolled, and the number of students that continue from year to year. We're above the national average in junior and senior year in enrollment. We do things with the kids beyond the classroom. Other than the homestay, we do field trips with them. We have clubs. I think those are real strengths. (Curric 2:10)

High enrollments depended on program offerings and teachers, as Carl saw it.

When asked what inspired students to continue past Level 3, he was quite explicit:

The teachers. The program. Clearly, I really think it's the teacher's interest in what he or she does, which is an offshoot of...which as an offshoot, is the creation of a homestay program. I think students take the exam at the end of the third year, and often go on to fourth and fifth years because they hope to go to France, or they hope to go to Spain. It's thanks to the commitment of teachers like we have here that they're able to do that. I think that's why we have large enrollments in upper level courses. I don't know why else they would take it. That's what's kind of an interesting challenge to us: there's absolutely no obligation to take--we have the state diploma so they have to take three years if they want the so-called State Regents Diploma--but after the Regents Diploma, there's no obligation to take any language whatsoever if they don't want to.



PM: They've met the requirements.

C: They've met the requirements. I guess national dropout rates after the third year of language is incredible. I think we've been able to do pretty well with that. We've doubled over the past three or four years enrollment in advanced classes, which is pretty neat.

PM: That's coming from an established tradition, it sounds like. Students know what is in store for them in those third and fourth years.

C: Yeah, I think that's what it is. And the teachers provide an atmosphere where a lot of learning occurs, and there are rewards at the end. Whether it be academic awards, such as Advanced Placement and college credit, or the possibility to travel abroad. I would suggest that schools that offer such things are probably the schools that have the highest enrollment in their programs. (Curric 1:17)

These attractions were not only necessary to encourage students to continue their study of language, but to compete against other subject matter areas in the school, such as math and science. Foreign languages needed to be competitive in order to remain viable.

As these students, particularly the Honors students, proceed through their high school career, they have a lot of options. Many are real interested in math. Many are real interested in science. The math program, the science program, the social studies program, and the English program in this school all have these Advanced Placement courses. So students are able to get, oftentimes to receive, upwards of fifteen to twenty hours college credit before they even graduate from high school. I think it's real important for us to offer that option, because the students have every choice to do whatever they wish with their schedule. Whatever we can do to create interest in their continuing their language education is certainly to our benefit, I would say. (Curric 1:9)

As program advocate, Carl perceived that he had to "reach out" beyond the students and the "four walls of the classroom" to others who contributed to the success of the language program: school administrators and members of the community.

... as I grow older, as I have more experiences, my willingness to reach out has increased. My willingness to ask for things from the community. My willingness to ask for things from the administration. To get people involved. And to see my teaching as more than my students and four walls of the classroom. I think that's been very important, and it's been a very good lesson for me to see that learning a language has a lot more to do than what we do in a textbook, or what I do with students. That it's important to include the community. That it's important to apprise the administration of what we're doing. Even if we apprise them of what we're doing, and there's no reaction, I think it's really important for them to know. I think that's one thing that we can continually be working on in this school--is to be really aware of what's going on in other subject areas, and what other teachers are doing, so that we can benefit, as well. (Bio 3:9)

The students' families were critical to the success of the exchange program, since they hosted French students during their two-week stay in the community.

We have several meetings with the students, and always a major meeting with the families before the kids arrive, and what to expect, and responsibilities. It's been wonderful. The results have been great. The families in this area are very responsible, and very willing to make this work. We're very fortunate in that regard, especially since we do this quite often. We have thirty who are going in April. All signed up and ready to go this year. It's wonderful that they're that willing to do it. I hope we appreciate them as much as we think. We send them letters of appreciation, and things like that. It's a really neat experience. I see the kids gain a great deal from it. (Bio 3:8)





To summarize the program advocate role, Carl saw a responsibility to nourish and enhance the language program by making it attractive to students and competitive with other subjects in the school curriculum. This involved his reaching out beyond the program to including the community, especially through the exchange program.

The diagram below illustrates specific dimensions of these overlapping roles.

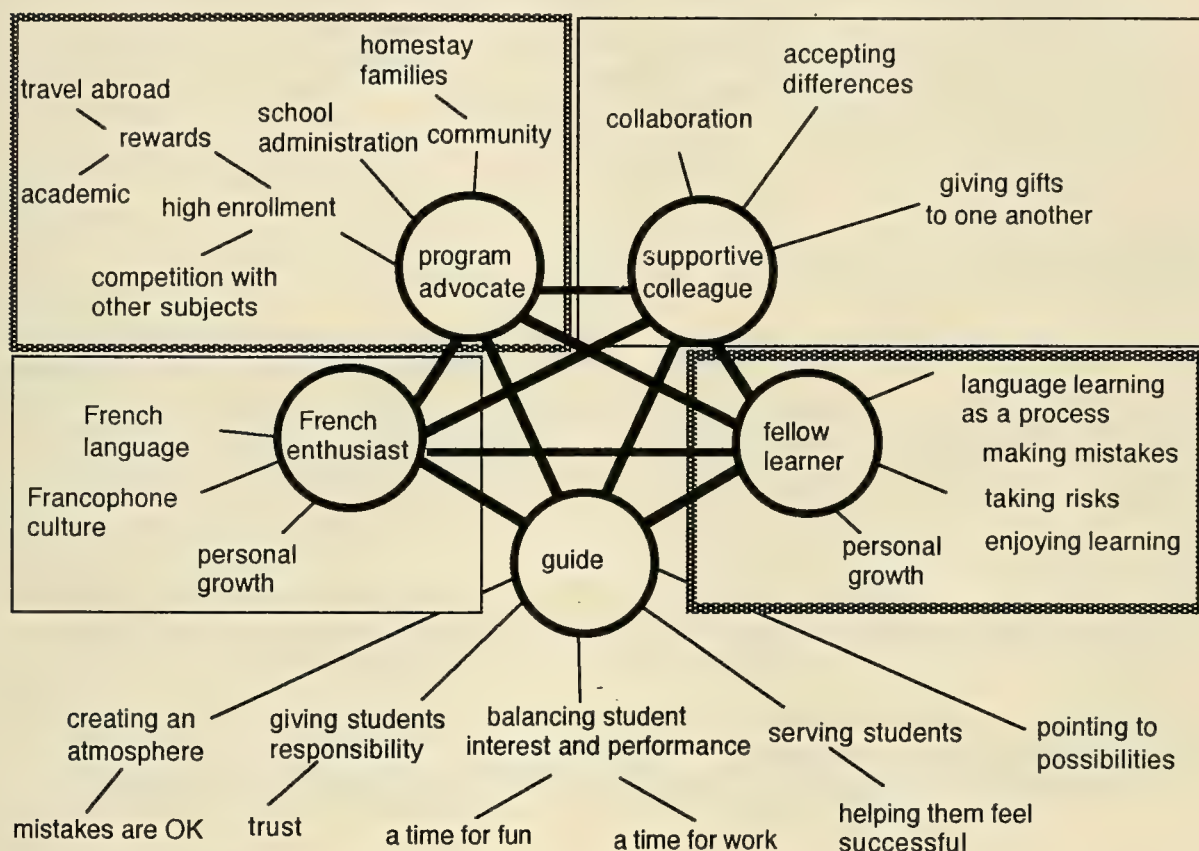


Figure 28: Teacher Roles II

## Students

Carl's conceptions of students, to infer from his conceptions of teacher role, were at the heart of his teaching of French. As shown in the following illustration, Carl saw students as human beings with great potential, deserving of his commitment and efforts, who, with their varying abilities in French and in school, reflected his attitudes and behavior.



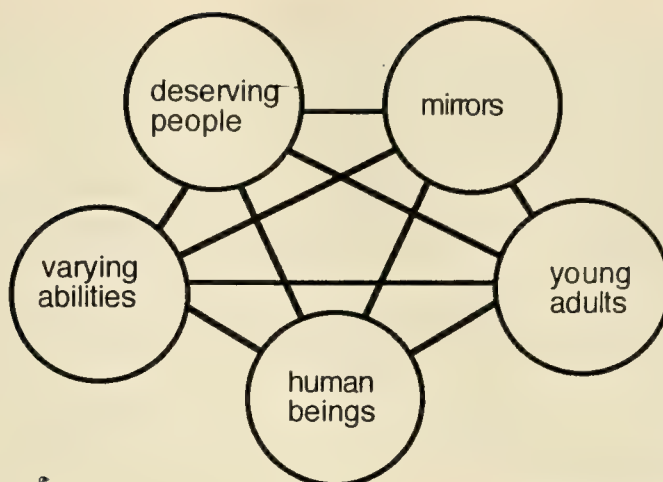


Figure 29: View of Students

At this point in his career, Carl considered students as his primary interest, beyond methodology, and even the language itself.

I don't know if it's in any particular vein, or that there are any particular methodologies that I adhere to, but I just think it's so much a...it's really eclectic. There are a lot of different things going on in my head, when things are going on. But the interest now, in 1994, is more in the student than it is in the language. What will they take with them out of their study of French with Mr. Harvey? (Obs 1:16)

This view of students involved his view of relationship, as well:

I think that's what makes a class work. I think that the rapport that's established between the teacher and student is probably the first priority. (Obs 3:10)

You know, I've been teaching...this is my twenty-second year teaching, and I've never enjoyed it as much as I do now. It's getting better and better. I think for a general philosophy for me is my students are doing as well as I'm doing. How I do is how they do, not the opposite. I think that for me that would be an overriding theme of my teaching. (Bio 1:3)

### **Human Beings**

Carl used the term "human being" on several occasions when referring to students, and to himself, as well. While this may seem somewhat abstract at first glance, this conception reflected Carl's view of students as persons or people, not as students. In other words, he saw them as persons with great potential.

When asked to describe the students in the language program, Carl answered with what amounted to a manifesto of sorts, a credo:

I'm really glad you're asking that question in October of 1994. Because that, I think, is probably where one of the biggest shifts occurred, one of the biggest transformations for me has occurred. I think it's about seeing students as human beings who are capable of great things, who are capable of great love, who are capable of great accomplishment, and who are capable of doing magnificent things. And letting them know that's why they're here. And not looking at them so much as young, inexperienced, as needing to be controlled in any way. As soon as I create any kind of rapport or relationship with them, they know--I'd like to think that they know--that I think they're valuable. They deserve my attention. They deserve my commitment. They deserve my inspiration. They clearly deserve to be here. (Curric 1:19)





Seeing students as "capable of great things" meant seeing them as "valuable," and that they therefore "deserve" Carl's commitment to helping them be successful and create new possibilities for themselves. This view was a very influential dimension of Carl's overall conception of teaching French. He described the impact that it held for him:

I think I've always kind of felt that, but now I really get it. There were times--there are times--when it'll be the end of the day, and I know they've been through whatever they've been through, through seven periods. They come to class, and I can just see. They're either wiped out, or they're really, really tired. I can see that, you know, it's like, "Here we go..." The little shifts that occur, that have occurred for me, is saying, "Wow." Just recognizing what they're going through in their lives, not only academically, but within their families, and going on in this country, and everything. Just kind of a lot of empathy for them as human beings than I ever have before. When I can just look at them, and just say, "Wow you're going through a lot of stuff. You're fourteen, or you're fifteen, and you're growing up in the 1990s. You've got a lot going on. So what am I going to do to support you? What am I going to do to hopefully inspire you, and to create an atmosphere where there's some fun, and where there's some kindness, and where there's some empathy?" (Curric 1:19)

Students' capacity for "great things" related to how learning French in Carl's courses offers them new possibilities for "creating their lives", in addition to learning French.

I think it shows up in how I relate with students, and what they're able to accomplish in the class. Because I see them as one hundred percent capable of doing great things in French. (Bio 3:2)

Carl listed a few examples of how students had changed their lives:

I think the general heading for all that might be that they are powerful enough to create their lives any way they choose. That they...it's the whole thing about they deserve to be here. They deserve to have a great life, and travel can be part of it. Creating friendships with people abroad can clearly be part of it. It's great for me to feel as though I can be a conduit to that. You know, I've had students in the past visit, and spend time there, and...learn French there. Some have come back and talked French here, and some haven't. One went over and married a Frenchman, and she has a baby, now. It's like, anything is possible. And if they want it to be possible, if they want it just for traveling...Great! It's just another thing that they can do with their lives. (Bio 1:6)

### ***Deserving People***

Because of their potential, Carl sees the students as "deserving."

PM: What do you mean by deserve? What are you getting at there?

C: Well, they deserve everything...that I can do for them. They deserve...kindness. They deserve joy. They deserve happiness. They deserve my commitment.

PM: And by deserve, you mean...?

C: Are worthy of.

PM: Are worthy of. It's their prerogative. It's their...?

C: It's their right. There are days I don't give, I don't deliver on that, always. There are days when I've got things on my mind, when they don't get my unbridled feelings of this general love I have for my job. But at least now they know when I don't. (Curric 1:19)

This conception of students as being "worthy" dictated, to Carl's way of thinking, his responsibility to "give", "deliver" and otherwise provide them with the support they need to succeed.



## **Mirrors**

In the above excerpt, Carl alluded to another core conception of students, that they were mirrors of him, his demeanor. In other words, he could see himself in the students. This view paralleled his enthusiast role as teacher. Such was the importance of this view that Carl mentioned it many times in the course of the nine interviews. In fact, he mentioned it almost immediately in the first interview:

C: You know, one thing...it might be a good idea for me to tell you...I think if there's one thing that may be important to know about me and my teaching is when I walk into the classroom, I see that the students are always a perfect mirror for how I'm being. OK?

PM: Perfect mirror for how you're being?

C: Be-ing. In other words, they will reflect back my interests. They'll reflect back my enthusiasm. They'll reflect back everything that I give them. I've noticed that with all the work that I've done on myself in recent years, you know, personal work, work that's helped me increase my own self-esteem, and it's directly reflected in my own classes. (Bio 1:3)

"How I do is how they do, not the opposite," as Carl put it. By this, Carl was saying more than the success of his teaching techniques would result in students' success in learning. He was also saying that what he "projects" of himself would be picked up and reflected by the students. He gave an example of how this worked in the 10R class:

In the same regard, I can see, for example, in work that I'm doing even with my sophomores, even this week. They have to do twenty-five lines each, unrehearsed--a dialogue at my desk--about getting to know each other. Pretending they're roommates before they go on this trip to Québec. It's totally unrehearsed. They just come up and handle it, and seven minutes is over, and they're done. It's not like there's a lot of complaining, or moaning, or generally any problem with it. They know that it's entirely possible, and they'll do it. If I project to them that, "You don't need notes. You can just speak French. You can trust what the other person is going to say is totally comprehensible to you, then you'll pull this off. You'll do great." That's what's been happening. It's an example of what's going on. (Bio 3:2)

## **Of Varying Abilities**

Even though Carl viewed his students as all capable of great things, he also recognized that they possessed different levels of ability in French in particular, and in school in general.

Students' varying abilities were already formalized in the two tracks, Honors and Regents. Because of this, there was a "stigma" attached to the Regents track. Some teachers in the department believed that the R students were less capable of doing well in languages than the Honors students, or as Carl put it: "they are typified as being a little bit slower, a little bit less able" (Curric 1:11).

However, students varying abilities existed even in the Honors track. Carl saw two broad groupings in the Level 5 class:

What I've found--again this is only my second year of teaching it--we have quite a dichotomy of ability. Some clearly interested in going on in French in college and being language majors, language teachers--what have you. Some who just like French and think it's fun, or whatever, and are not serious language students--who want to go to France, for example. Who want to participate in the homestay. So to accommodate a wide range of interests and ability is often an interesting challenge. (Curric 1:9)





Thus, one group of students were not only able in French, but they were motivated to continue their study beyond high school as language majors in college. The second group "are not serious language students" but they like French, enjoy class, and perhaps are motivated by the exchange program.

In a later interview, Carl was able to provide an even finer distinction of the varying abilities in this same Level 5 class:

I would say almost a third of them are really capable of doing very well on that exam. For high school, I'm very pleased with those. It's probably three distinct divisions. Strong academically, willing to participate.

The second division would be strong academically, less willing to participate. In other words, less development of oral skills. Part of it is language-oriented, and part of it is a question of self-confidence, and speaking up and a willingness to make errors, and things like that. I think that the top four or five in that class have an enhanced self-concept. I think they feel pretty good about who they are; therefore, they're willing to just go for it, willing to try things, willing to make mistakes, willing to laugh at themselves. I think there's a self-consciousness maybe in the second group a little bit more, partially because of how they feel they are in French, and partially their own self-image.

Then, I would say there's probably a third division of students who are very reticent to speak, and who clearly feel that they are not near the top. I don't know. I think that's something that the American educational system often fosters, unfortunately, the idea of competition. You know, that I'm never going to be as good as he or she is. That's why I'm really happy that they can feel successful. There are a couple of students who are academically weak. (Obs 1:4)

Carl cast the distinctions as related to students' ability and their self-concept, the confidence to simply "go for it" and not worry about making mistakes. This reflected his conception that self-concept was connected to ability, and vice versa.

Nonetheless, Carl did recognize that he needed to manage these differences in students' abilities:

One thing that I'm really working on now is not to always call on the first two hands which go up, and be a little bit more aware of those students who aren't quite as interested or don't find it quite as easy. I would say that's probably what I'm working on most this year. Or a student who, for some reason, he or she is not real great in French. Going up at the end of class, and saying, "Hey how are you doing? Are you OK with what we're doing? Is this going OK? Anything I can do for you?" Just being a little bit more aware. Because I love them when they're smart. I just love it when they're active. I love it when they're interested. I mean, who doesn't? But now, I think, just getting more interested in everyone, rather than just the brightest. (Curric 1:20)

In addition, he placed responsibility on the stronger students to help the weaker ones feel successful. He described what he did with two such students in his 10R class:

Well, Rich is very talented. He just soaks everything in. He's the one who asked me for my 501 Verb book so he can do them all on his computer. I said, Sure, take it. He wrote them all on his computer. He's like beyond...he's motivated, and he gets everything. Alan was one of my weakest. In fact, last year, he was a discipline problem. He was real difficult to control, and he's been like a personal, almost like a personal quest for me, to see what I can do to get along with him. I've been working with him, doing some self-esteem things with him. He's a great wrestler. He's had a lot of success in wrestling, so every day when he comes in, I try to mention something about wrestling, or something like that. He has been making a lot of progress.



They practiced [the dialogue] once together, I think. I think I gave the kids two ten-minute practices last week, just to run through it. I wanted them to work with somebody they hadn't worked with before. I said, "OK you two work together." I told Rich, "What can you do to make Alan successful?" (Obs 1:14)

### ***Young adults***

Carl also saw students as young adults, very much in the process of maturing, constantly coping with issues and challenges in and out of school. In Carl's view, students had to cope with schooling itself, with other people, and they had to deal with their own issues of confidence and self-esteem.

Not all students were successful in school, particularly students in the lower levels and the Regents track. Some of these students did not like school, and their experience in courses was negative. For such students, Carl made accommodations in his expectations and outcomes, as far as French was concerned.

I have students who, especially in this class (10R), who don't like school, and whose experience in education in this country of ours has been negative. They're just constantly beat upon. You don't do your homework, just getting sixties and seventies, and just can't wait to get out of school. Fortunately there are sports programs. Fortunately they have friends. And fortunately there are a lot of other things that kind of offset this. If I do have to give grades, and if French isn't their thing, if they're just not going to learn to speak French quite as fluently as somebody else, maybe out of my class, they can make a new friend. I don't know. We do a lot of group work. We do a lot of dialogues and stuff like that. I believe that there's something everybody can take out of it. If it looks like, "Hey I met Mary in French class, and we're friends." Then great! It's great. Sometimes it doesn't look like French at all. And if that's what it is, then that's dandy with me. (Curric 1:21)

Carl's solution was to encourage such students' success in his classes, which usually meant that they enjoy the learning experience, and that they feel acknowledged.

C: I wanted to see Meredith get up there [and do the dialogue], the one with the short hair, because it's what she does best. Her writing is not great, but she loves to participate. She loves to be part of it. I knew it wasn't going to be perfect French. They get silly, you know. They're fifteen. I know what's going on in her home life, too. Anywhere she can feel the least bit successful, I think, is really positive.

PM: Does that play a big role in your work with these students, knowing what's going on with them outside class?

C: A lot I don't know. It's just...some, I do. Some I've heard, and some, Guidance people tell me about. I'd almost like to know more. I know that being a high school student is not an easy place to be in life. They have a lot of stuff going on other than French class. I think it's real important to be acknowledged as much as possible, and to have some fun, as much as possible, in school. (Curric 2:17)

Acknowledging these students and helping them feel successful did seem to have an impact. Carl described the experience of a boy who had been failing in middle school:

I have a boy in the 10R program, who's spending the year in France next year, which is really cool. . . . He's a junior. He was failing in the middle school. It's those little things that happen. It's this one boy. It's just so... When he showed me his application, he showed me he was accepted to go to France, it was like so touching. It was so heartwarming that this boy really loves what he does, and he's really felt successful, and now he wants to go there and spend a year. . . . So, it's like this is what's possible. I didn't even know he was doing it, until he showed





me that he was accepted. So it's neat. It's really...I think that's what teaching is all about. About him, and who knows what else is going to happen? (Curric 3:23)

Another aspect of schooling that young persons had difficulty with was the passive student role that they were expected to play in class. Passivity was anathema to Carl, the opposite of what he sought in his classes, and what people were all about:

OK, I'll say it: I think our educational system fosters passivity in the classroom. I think our system fosters: "You're a good student if you are quiet, if you pay attention to what the teacher says, if you take good notes." The older I get and the more I'm learning about language acquisition and students' learning styles, the more I see that what's important is exactly the opposite, at least for me, at least to see a class work. If I can get them up and moving and talking and listening and touching, and doing all those things, I think that's when the best learning occurs in my class. I think it's more important for me to offer them the skill development in any of these areas as much as possible, every week.

It was so funny--I'm just going to give you a little anecdote, a little side note to this. My class--I would love it, if you ever have an opportunity to come in and visit--my class fourth period, you know this track (Regents Track), they're absolutely unbelievable. They have a ton of energy. I can just feel the energy coming into the room. I can't imagine what it would be like in other classes, when they just have to sit. I don't think human beings just want to sit. They want to talk, they want to have fun. We just do so much. We're ringing bells, and they're working in groups, and all this. At the end of class, I had just had a couple up to my desk, and they were talking. The other kids over here were practicing, and some were doing this, and some were doing that. A teacher from another department came in, and she went: "Wow, this class is totally out of control!" And I said, "Yeah isn't it great!" She gave me this look, like..."What are you doing?" You know, a lot of people think it's just fun and games down here, when, on the contrary, for me, it's when people--human beings--are the most alive! You know, they're able to talk and communicate. It's great to see students laugh! Oh my God! (Curric 1:12)

As described earlier in this chapter, student enjoyment and laughter were essential to Carl's conception of teaching French, and in his estimation, there simply wasn't enough of either in the school, especially for those students who had a difficult time with schooling.

To summarize, Carl's conception of students was based primarily on seeing them as human beings capable of great things, with the potential to create new possibilities in their lives. In his eyes, they were deserving of his commitment, his support in helping them become successful, regardless of their varying abilities in French or in school. In their responses to his demeanor in class, they served as mirrors to Carl, reflecting whatever he projected to them.

## **Content**

Carl viewed content, French, as having three dimensions: linguistic, cultural, personal growth. He described this tripartite conception in a few different ways. He referred to the parts as "components" (Bio 2:14). When describing these components, he tended to use the words "linguistic," "cultural," and "personal growth," although he did bring in other terms as well. Holding these together was Carl's view of language as communication. In his words, "Everything has a communicative base" (Curric 1:3).



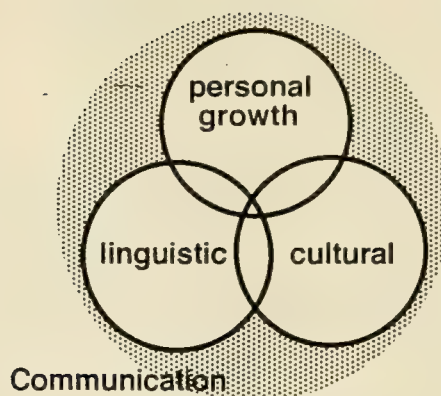


Figure 30: Content

These components comprised the material that Carl asked students to work on. They represented both the content areas and their application or use. For example, linguistic content areas like grammar and vocabulary, speaking and listening were applied in activities where students used them to communicate with one another. In the same vein, students discussed cultural content areas along with their connections to their own lives--personal growth content. Carl described this interplay among components in the Level 5 class:

I think if they start with themselves, and they speak the language, and they're able to take a look at a cultural component, in that cultural component is the possibility of looking right back at their own lives. So after we've talked about the French, and the preponderance of fast food, and things like that, then we talk about, "Well what's going on in your family? How often do you eat with your family? What do you think of that? What does this mean to you? Would you like to spend more time with your family?" I think there's a lot of possibility for growth. Growth can look like linguistic growth, but I think growth can also look like personal growth. (Bio 2:14)

Here, students move from speaking the language--linguistic content, to speaking about a particular cultural content topic, to the connections to their own lives. All this is set within a communicative context, where students use language to communicate about culture and about themselves.

This interplay was more apparent for the advanced levels, 4 and 5, because students had achieved a certain level of ability in French. They were able to "speak the language." In contrast, the emphasis in Levels 1-3 was different, since students were concentrating on "language acquisition,"

... the beginning years are basically language building years. Although we're beginning to do a little bit more cultural content with the sophomores and the younger kids, I would say the large majority of the time is spent on language acquisition. (Curric 2:6)

The language building years thus featured more of an emphasis on the linguistic component. Students needed to build their ability in language.

Even with this distinction between the beginning years and the advanced levels, the interconnectedness between the linguistic and the cultural components was quite strong. Carl continually referred to the language program as "communicatively based" (Curric 2:10). The linguistic component was defined by the cultural component, through its cultural themes, and its emphasis on communicative language.





Even though these components are interconnected in Carl's conception, they are also distinct. Let me describe each separately before describing the interconnections.

### ***The Linguistic Component***

When describing the linguistic component, Carl qualified it with words like "linguistic skill" (Curric 1:15), "linguistic competency" (Curric 3:13), "linguistic ability" (Curric 3:11), or equivalent expressions like "proficiency in the language" (Obs 2:13), "using the language" (Obs 2:7), and "facility with the language" (Bio 2:16). Essentially, Carl meant that students needed to be "able to speak French, to express themselves, to write, and to understand" (Curric 3:11), or put simply, "to communicate in French" (Obs 1:2).

In Carl's view, the linguistic component consisted of the skills dimension: speaking, listening, reading, and writing, that is to say, applications of the language. Linguistic content also consisted of "vocabulary," "grammar" or "structure," "expressions," and "functions." The four skills and linguistic content were united by "themes," umbrella concepts. For example, the 10R course was organized around the trip to Québec, with themes like My Québécois Friend, Getting Ready for the Trip, Montréal, Shopping. The Level 5 course was organized around "the rich tradition of France," with themes like film, opera, drama, literature, music.

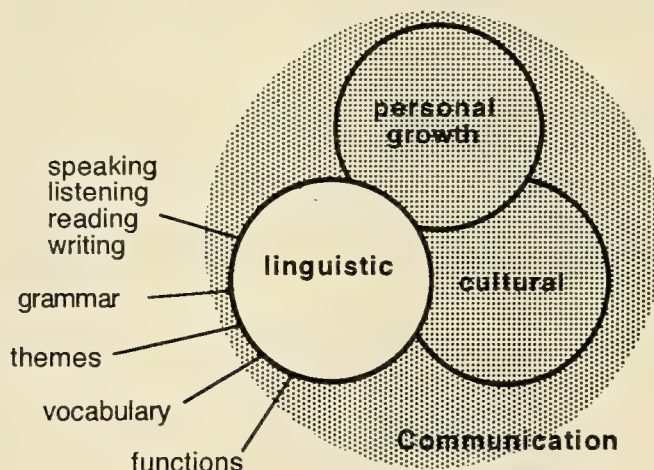


Figure 31: Linguistic Content

Carl made two distinctions regarding these linguistic content areas. First, he had established a hierarchy of importance for the four skill areas, which he derived in part from the New York State Regents examination for foreign languages:

Every school, on that one given day in September, at that one specified time, everyone in the state who's taking French takes that one. And we grade it. It's sixty percent multiple choice, twenty-four percent speaking, sixteen percent writing. I am sure a lot of thought went into this exam. To me, it seems about pretty close to how people spend their lives: that much listening--thirty percent listening, twenty-four percent speaking. Thirty percent reading seems a little--this again is just a personal opinion, I'd love it if people spent thirty percent reading. And sixteen percent writing. It used to be a lot more skewed a lot more toward writing than it was toward speaking. But I'm really supportive that one quarter of the exam is speaking. (Curric 1:7)



Beyond these exam requirements, the percentages--30% listening, 24% speaking, 30% reading, 16% writing--struck Carl as largely reflective of how people use language in their lives, and therefore valid.

I would say most definitely speaking and listening. Reading. Then writing. . . . In terms of where I spend the most time in a typical week in a class. And I just pretty much kind of try to align it with, at least my perception of how life really is. We spend a lot more time listening and speaking than we do reading and writing. At least in the 90s. I'm not saying that this is something that I particularly agree with, but I think that's where we are. (Bio 2:13)

Second, Carl viewed accuracy or correctness in speaking--particularly in terms of grammar, as less important than the act of speaking itself. For him, it was more important that students make the effort to express themselves, that they simply "go for it," or "let 'er rip"--that they get their point across and not worry too much about getting it exactly right:

C: . . . they're getting the point across. It's not easy for an American to say, I didn't see it, in French. . . . There will be teachers--there will be *je ne l'ai pas vue*, and if the whole thing isn't right, especially that *e* on *vue*, then the whole sentence is wrong. Forget it. I feel fortunate that I'm working with June, in particular, who is more communicatively based, and will help these kids feel successful next year.

PM: Where's that coming from? Where's that belief of yours coming from?

C: From my love of the language, and not to hack it apart to death, not to just cut it up into little bits, and spit it out. I think it comes out of my growing flexibility with people, and just a growing vision of what I think is important, what I think is useful, why I think one studies language in the first place. (Obs 1:15)

While this view obviously relates to the kind of outcomes Carl sought in his teaching, it also speaks to his view of language as communication, not as "grammatical and boring":

. . . learning French...I think language--language learning--can easily have a stigma. It can be deadly. You know, grammatical, and boring, and all that stuff. Or it can be just like the most fascinating thing. (Bio 1:7)

Just lessen the trend toward perfection, and increase communication a little bit more. (Obs 3:11)

These two interpretations of the linguistic component showed the strength of Carl's conviction about language as communication, and thus the connection to the cultural component.

### ***The Cultural Component***

The content items in the linguistic component came directly from the themes of cultural component. For Levels 1-3, cultural themes were defined largely by the textbook series, focused mostly on France with vignettes of other Francophone countries and cultures. Levels 4 and 5 also focused on France, but primarily on the exchange program and topics relevant to the homestay and the trip, through a curriculum designed and taught by Carl and June.

These overlaps notwithstanding, however, Carl tended to view cultural content primarily as "knowledge", which he characterized as either "small c culture" or "capital C culture."





It's kind of the things that we're talking about now, that June's currently doing in her fourth year class with capital C culture, when she's talking about the provinces and she's talking about the cities, and she gets into life in the cities, and life in the provinces. The educational system, and things like that. (Curric 2:6)

. . . all the capital C culture stuff--having a basic knowledge of mountains and rivers, and where cities are, and principal cities--just a basic knowledge, a basic knowledge of history, a basic knowledge of literature . . . (Curric 2:6)

It's geography, a lot about the geography, a lot about products, a lot about cities, a lot about history, art. It's almost capital C culture, or capital C civilization. (Curric 1:3)

. . . you're studying small c culture, themes like cuisine, themes like lodging, themes like leisure activities. . . (Curric 3:7)

In his definition, small c topics seemed to deal with daily life, whereas capital C topics involved civilization, history, geography, institutions, and the like.

Carl named these twin emphases particularly evident in the curricula for Levels 4 and 5, where the focus on France needed to address both small c and capital C. These same emphases were evident in the three textbooks as well, although they were set within the more dominant emphasis on communicative functions. In Carl's design of the Québec curriculum, he followed the themes of the textbook. There, "capital C" topics such as general facts about Québec, Montréal, and Québec city were included alongside "small c" topics like the Restaurant and Shopping.

At the same time, in Carl's conception of the cultural component, cultural knowledge was intimately connected to outcomes and activities, as well as with the linguistic component and the personal growth component. Again, because of the interconnectedness, Carl talked about cultural outcomes such as "developing a friendship" or "an interest in travel" as a result of the cultural activities in the exchange programs with France and Québec. Or, he described how discussion of the cultural theme of a film could lead to students' personal growth--developing empathy for others who were different, not simply because of cultural differences. The following statements give an indication of how these dimensions overlapped in Carl's conception of the cultural component:

I think it's real important for me, when I'm looking at new materials, or when I'm constructing a unit, I really have to ask myself, Is this valuable? Is what I'm doing going to be valuable to them? First of all, valuable to them as students who might possibly travel there. Valuable to them--with a cultural component. What can they learn about this other society that they don't already know? And thirdly, what will they learn about themselves by learning about this other society? (Bio 2:14)

I think we often talk about the differences between, and the similarities, between the French and the American, or the Canadians and the Americans. Yesterday, for example, we were talking about the Canadian dollar, you know, and the difference between the exchange rates, and the price of things up there, and getting them a little bit more in tune that other societies exist beyond our own, and to take a look at how other people live, so that they can develop some kind of empathy at least for how other people live. (Bio 2:2)

First of all, to gain an appreciation of another culture. To gain an appreciation that people exist on this planet who aren't quite...who have a lot of differences but it's totally possible for us to exist together, and create great things together on this planet. Secondly, I see this as the development of an obviously linguistic skill, but also the possibility for personal growth, the possibility for increased self-confidence and self-esteem through use of the language. (Curric 1:15)



It wasn't so much the cultural knowledge itself that mattered to Carl. Rather, it was the impact of this cultural content on students, what they did with it.

Carl described the cultural component of the Québec curriculum in similar ways:

...we just finished a unit on Making Invitations, inviting people to do things. So if I can use a communicative theme like Making an Invitation with some kind of cultural content regarding Québec, whether it be shopping, or going to a restaurant, or visiting Montreal, it really works well. (Curric 2:5)

If anything, I can at least help to develop some kind of interest in traveling, or they could feel confident in getting out of this area and going up to Québec. (Bio 1:6)

The neat thing about going there now is that I've redesigned the second year program to be totally about Québec. And I found myself just always looking for materials, or speaking a lot of French to listen to how they speak the language, and just really being in tune with the things that the students might like, or things the students might use. (Bio 2:1)

Even with young students, those who are only in the second year--this is the reason why I changed the second-year curriculum...Before it was, you know, review these chapters in the book. There were a lot of really neat expressions, and it was very communicative, but it didn't have that cultural component, where one could...possibly survey the possibility of creating a friendship. I think when people have the opportunity to make the whole situation as real as possible, it brings the language alive for the students. I think these kids, these sophomores, knowing that in May, they will indeed go to Québec, and that the Canadians will indeed come here, it makes the whole situation that much more palatable for them. (Bio 2:1)

So in culture, in speaking about culture, what I've found recently, especially--even in going to Québec this weekend--I was constantly looking for materials for them to use. What I mean by that is realia that has something to do with things that they actually might do or might experience in Québec. You know, like I buy newspapers and cut out the news, articles that they can possibly read, or timetables, or film-announcements, or things like that. (Bio 2:1)

What comes across loud and clear in these excerpts is how cultural content drives the linguistic component, how the culture and the language need to be "as real as possible." The reality of students' travel and homestay, of their meeting real people and perhaps creating a friendship, of language that they could actually use, of materials that came directly from the culture all show how Carl viewed the importance of the cultural component.

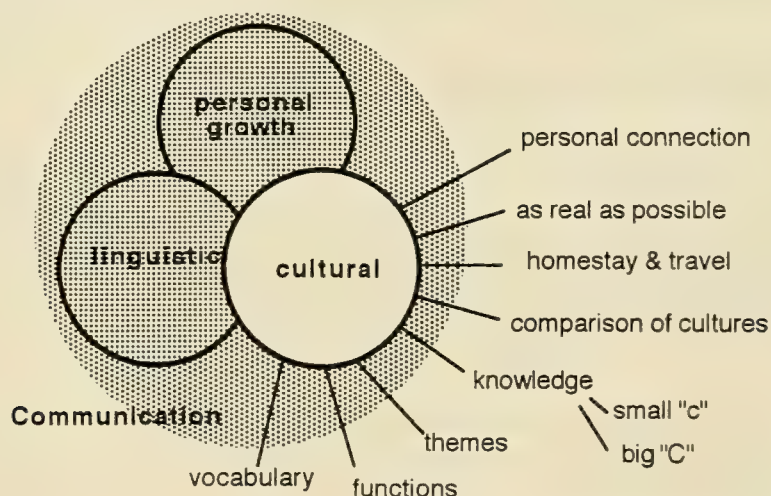


Figure 31: Cultural Content





Also evident in Carl's descriptions of the cultural component is the personal connection, the relevance and value that the students attach to what they are learning.

### ***Personal Growth Component***

As described above, Carl's conception of personal growth as a content area consisted in large part as an application of linguistic and cultural content, in that he asked students to make personal connections to the material.

In terms of content, the personal connection appeared primarily in the form of questions that Carl put to students, questions which invited them to relate the material to themselves in some manner. It also appeared in Carl's choice of themes. He chose themes that he thought could be meaningful or relevant to students. For instance, in the Level 5 curriculum changeover to the "rich tradition of France," Carl chose themes that had personal significance for him. Not only did they allow him to bring his own experiences directly to students, but the themes also bore the same potential for the students.

The following excerpts illustrate the sort of questions that Carl asked which were intended to elicit personal connections of one sort or another.

And I asked them, "Is there anything on this list that could apply to you? If you could put yourself in my place, if you had been studying French for twenty-five years, what might be interesting to you?" (Curric 3:4)

But beyond that, what is there to be gained from reading *L'Etranger*, other than an increased knowledge of the language? There's a lot beyond just reading a book. There's a lot to be gained from reading a book. "Of what value is this to you personally?" (Curric 3:5)

So after we've talked about the French, and the preponderance of fast food, and things like that, then we talk about, "Well what's going on in your family? How often do you eat with your family? What do you think of that? What does this mean to you? Would you like to spend more time with your family?" (Bio 2:14)

... when I mentioned Carmen, they said, "Ooh, Opera." I said, "What do you think it is that you don't...aren't interested in?" "Oh, we just don't like it." "Well, why is it that you don't like it? Could it be because you don't know anything about it?" (Curric 2:2)

Their French will improve, but what I'm looking forward to discussing is: "What is this film [*Au Revoir les Enfants*] really about for you? What is the message in this film to you?" (Curric 2:4)

It was neat to be able to talk about that in the framework of the book, about Erik, *le fantôme*. Not only did he hide himself physically with his mask, but he also hid himself away from people. "What do you do to keep yourself away?" We talked about that within the framework of the class: "What would we have to do to improve communication?" And, "How is communication with people in your life?" We started really getting into some issues this time, which I really felt good about. I tried to ask them today about the symbolism of the book as they saw it: "What is there for you?" "What do you do with...?" I know a few of their boyfriends, and I asked them, "Do you see anything for you in your relationship?" (Obs 1:1)

That [conflicts in homestays] often happens. All I can say is, "Well just check it out. What does this do? Does this help you to improve your relationship with the person, or the people you're with? Or does it distance you? Are you creating closeness, or are you creating distance?" (Bio 3:13)



Thus the actual content, in terms of personal growth, depended on how students answered such questions and the nature of the discussion that ensued.

It also depended on Carl's own answers to the same questions, the information about himself that he brought out in class. This involved the sharing with students simple anecdotes of personal experiences in the culture:

I think the idea of [all we French teachers] actually studying in France. Everyone has studied in France. Everyone has lived with families, or been married to a Frenchman, or something like that, so that we have some kind of connection to France. I think that's very important, because we bring a lot of stories with us, and a lot of anecdotes, and it really contributes to the program. We are actually aware of that country on the other side of the ocean. (Curric 2:11)

It also involved Carl's sharing of his own personal connections to the material:

Oh! I've got a great story about that. When we were discussing Phantom, and the whole idea of hiding behind a mask, and what do we do, what are our perceptions of people when we see them disfigured, or even, disfigured people, what do they do? One of the boys the next day said that he was at a concert in Syracuse and he had seen someone who was disfigured, and it was interesting for him to look at all the people and how they reacted to the disfigurement. What do we human beings do with things like that? How do we see our own personal disfigurements? We just got into a lot of things like that.

I think by my willingness to tell them what I do to hide myself away really opened them up, and I think we're a lot...I think there's a degree of closeness that was developed. (Obs 2:2)

The "closeness" between Carl and students is a very important ingredient to the personal growth component. In fact, in keeping with his role as guide, the level of trust that Carl established with students was the critical factor in determining how much personal growth could be achieved. Personal growth exploration depended on disclosure, which in turn depended on trust.

It is important to note that, for Carl, the personal growth dimension was perhaps even more important than the linguistic and cultural components, that is to say, the French components. Carl stated this clearly, by declaring French as a "by-product":

But, I think as time has worn on, I think French is a by-product of a lot of other things. French comes easily when they like what they're doing, when there's an interest developed. If I can show them, you know, how enthusiastic I am about it, and what I see is possible out of it...it may be something like bringing in letters that I get from my friends, or bringing in friends that I've met, or people that I know. Showing them pictures that...you know, This stuff can actually happen in your life. That we can make this stuff happen if we want to. So I think it's about how much are you willing to make happen in your life? (Bio 1:6)

Personal growth, then, is about "the stuff that can happen in your life" through the study of the French language and culture.





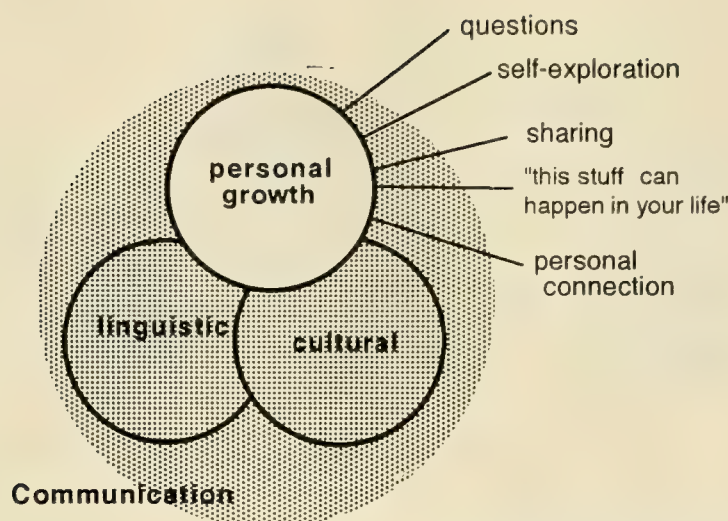


Figure 32: Personal Growth Content

### **Communication**

Communication was the conception that held the other content components together, to Carl's way of thinking. While it was very much a conception related to outcomes and activities--how language was used, it also was apparent in choice of communicative functions in the linguistic component.

I get clearer and clearer on the importance of communication. I think my emphasis on grammatical skills, and you know, "What verb is conjugated with *être* in the *passé composé*?" and all that--has so diminished from the early years. There's sort of instruction with it, but I am now so much more interested in what's necessary for people to communicate. (Bio 2:16)

My whole idea of a structurally based, grammatically based program, where there's little interaction between students, where communication is not fostered left a long time ago. (Curric 1:11)

When we were so attached to a textbook--be it ALM, be it whatever--it really detracted from the possibility of communication, because we were turning pages in a book and doing what the book said. I would say that the original emphasis, the original shift from textbook to teacher-created materials, was out of asking ourselves, What do we really want them to do? Do we want them to be able to conjugate verbs? Do we want them to be able to...memorize dialogues like when we were growing up? Or, do we want them to actually communicate? I think it was out of that--maintaining the closeness, maintaining the communication--that it's something that we as language teachers really uniquely have. We can talk to them about things, be it in another language, but we can still talk to them. (Curric 2:12)

They'll do some great stuff with it. I love to see them come up. They just speak French and make all sorts of mistakes, and they really communicate. I think very few of them are hesitant, or feel real nervous about coming up and doing it. (Curric 3:15)



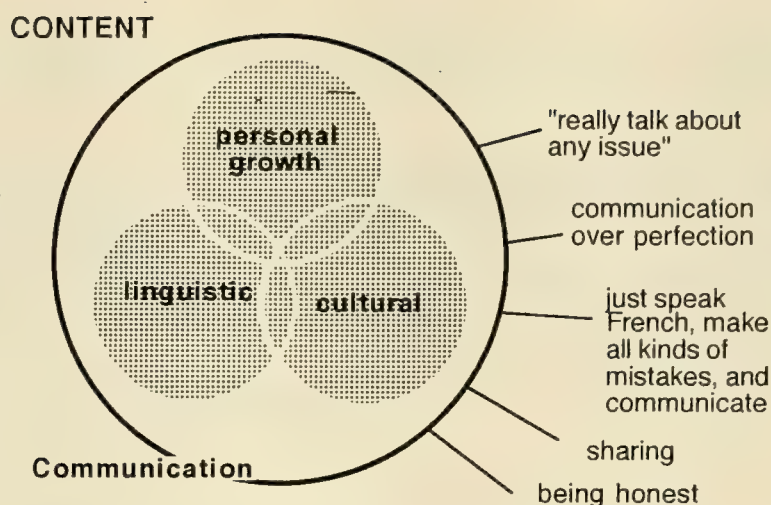


Figure 33: Communication Content

### ***Interconnectedness***

As is apparent from the above descriptions of these content components, there are distinct elements, but in Carl's thinking, they are interconnected.

The diagram below portrays the interconnectedness of the components. The course concept was derived from the overall language program. The cultural component appears in the course concept and the themes. It is further reflected in the linguistic component--the vocabulary and functions, from which the grammar is drawn. The communicative dimension was reflected in the functions and in Carl's choice of activities for speaking and listening, reading and writing. The personal growth component, as far as content was concerned, took the form of discussion questions related to themes.

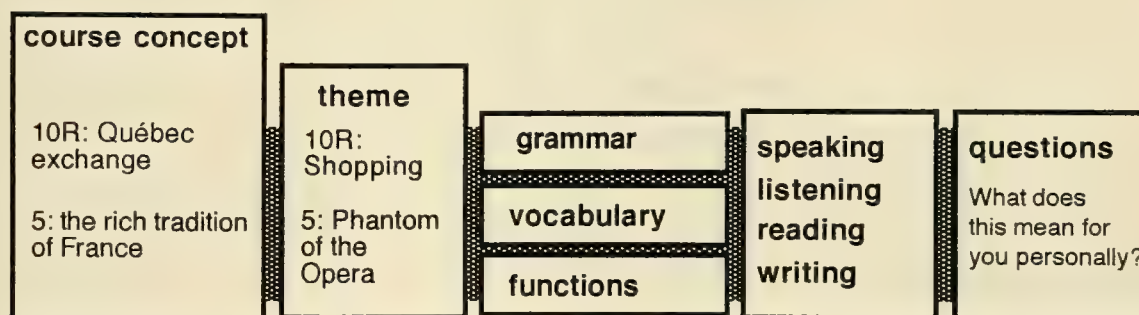


Figure 34: Interconnectedness of Content

This interconnectedness of content is reflected in Carl's two French classes.

### ***The 10R Class***

The dominant source of content for the 10R class was the second book in the series, *Nous les Jeunes*. This series was chosen because it was a communicatively based curriculum, and because it followed the state guidelines. Because they were in the





Regents track, the 10Rs were expected to take two years to complete this book, for a total of seven units. In the second year, they spent the first semester reviewing the first three units.

Carl's curriculum innovation of the Québec trip was scheduled within the review period. He changed the cultural content in *Nous les Jeunes*, but he was careful to include the grammar points from the book.

C: . . . they don't have it [the textbook]. They're getting pages of it, particularly structure. We did the first three units in this book last year. What we're doing now is reviewing those units--the first three units--but in a different way. So we're reviewing *passé composé*.

PM: So when you put together these units (referring to list of Québec units), you were looking at these (referring to book, *Nous Les Jeunes*)?

C: I'm looking at these only for the structural component.

PM: And vocabulary?

C: No. Some vocabulary, but mostly not. Mostly just changing the theme. I wonder how many of them really realize that this is what I'm doing. I hope they don't. It's mostly just the structural content. Like in the last unit, we were talking about preparing for the trip, we were doing a lot about inviting: "Do you want to go shopping with me?" "Do you want to buy this?" "What do you think of this?" It's a lot of this information. "What do you have to buy?" So, it was a lot of the first three chapters, the work that was in here. (Curric 3:18)

In the case of the 10Rs, the overall focus was the trip to Québec, which consisted of several specific themes, or generalized concepts, all related to the trip:

<i>le français 10R</i>	
<u><i>Voici le Québec</i></u>	
<i>Unit 1</i>	<i>Introductions</i>
<i>Unit 2</i>	<i>Mon copain quebecois</i>
<i>Unit 3</i>	<i>Préparations pour le voyage</i>
<i>Unit 4</i>	<i>Montréal</i>
<i>Unit 5</i>	<i>Au restaurant</i>
<i>Unit 6</i>	<i>Québec, la capitale</i>
<i>Unit 7</i>	<i>les sports et les loisirs</i>
<i>Unit 8</i>	<i>Oooauh! Chez le médecin</i>
(Obs 1)	

Figure 35: Québec Curriculum Outline

These themes all contained grammar points, vocabulary items, cultural knowledge, and communicative tasks related to the theme. Carl gave a broad sketch of what happened in the first six units:

Our first unit was.. We did a unit on Introductions, so that they get to know everybody in their traveling group. The next one was about Presentations. In other words, getting to know the people you're traveling with, so it's an interview process. The first one was just...Tell me about yourself. So they would come up to my desk and talk for five minutes all about themselves. The next one is...Bring up your room mate and talk with each other. And then the one after that will be packing our suitcases, and What are we bringing? Then we'll go to Montreal. And then we'll go to Québec City, and then we'll go to the restaurant. You know, that kind of thing. It's very thematically based. (Bio 2:4)



He described the content emphases in the first section of Unit 4, Montréal:

We're studying Montréal now. So we did a lot of the sights in Montreal, and we're reviewing the good old *passé composé*. You know, "What did you do in Montreal?" "What did you see?" "Did you like it?" "Did you have fun?" A lot of things in the past tense. So, I would show them pictures. "What did you see?" "Oh, I saw *Le Stade Olympique*." "Oh, did you go to a game?" "Yeah, I went to a game." "Who won?" You know, a lot of *passé composé*. Tomorrow, they'll be working on a dialogue, and talking to each other about things like that. (Curric 3:14)

### Level 5 Class

With the changeover in curriculum, the themes in Level 5 dealt more with capital C cultural content. The linguistic content was defined by the materials that Carl chose for each particular theme.

In describing the theme of French comic books, Carl told of the skill areas he wanted to emphasize, the vocabulary, and grammar.

... since the theme of the Fifth Year course is now The Rich Tradition of the French, we've done a play, and we're going to be doing a novel, and we're going to be doing opera. And this, you know, the French have a wonderful tradition with *bandes dessinées*, and on the very first day of this, I showed them lots of different ones-- *Lucky Luke*--and how they really like reading them, and things like that. Some of the kids took them home. It's kind of a...it's just another kind of, I don't want to say literature, it's another kind of expression that they use. That's where that came from, out of a real shortness of time, and that it was something different, it's fun, and they can easily read it.

I really wanted them to get into a lot more self-expression. I knew they could understand it, so I was real interested in them talking to each other about it, what they saw, what they liked, and how it was, so that they can speak a little bit more freely.

... We would read eight or nine pages a night, and they would be responsible for telling about it, plus vocabulary. They had vocabulary, and some of the grammatical expressions that we learned, and things like that. I was much more intent on this speaking aspect, this time, than I have been in the past--them speaking with each other, speaking in front of the class, than I was in the past. ... With Phantom [of the Opera], or anything else that we've done. We didn't spend as much time with each telling the other what they had read. It wasn't a lot of free flowing conversation. It was a lot more question-answer, and things like that. (Obs 3:3)

In fact, for this particular Level 5 class, Carl did put skill areas first.

But I'm real cognizant of what skill is available to work on, with a particular work. For example, I was really clear that this [comic book, *Astérix*] was pretty easy to read, so therefore, I really wanted them to work on self-expression. I wanted them to work on the speaking skill, whereas, the next one we're doing, when they're listening to songs, there'll clearly be a lot more listening comprehension. You know, "What will it take for you to understand this song?" So, I'm going to be making cassettes for every single one of them with songs on it for them to listen to. Good old Céline Dion and some of those others.

So, I think there's a lot that's systematic in what I do, but it's important for me to think beyond what I can fit in. What is my principal intention in doing this? My intention in this is to increase the speaking skill, and to be able to play with tenses more. I think they're real clear on the difference between *passé simple*, *passé composé*, and all the major tenses. We worked on things like that, so when they speak, they'll be able to say, *Il aurait du, il aurait pu*--expressions like that--much more freely than they had in the past. Whereas...next unit, I will really decrease emphasis on speaking and increase emphasis on listening comprehension, through songs. (Obs 3:5)





As for the personal growth component, this varied according the particular theme. In the case of the comic book theme, Carl saw this as exposure to a new form of expression in French culture, one that could strike students' fancy, and potentially involve them.

Again, though, what's the purpose of what I'm doing? What's my intention in all this? We've talked about this several times. If reading *Astérix*, if they had a good time doing it--we had fun, they laughed a lot, and several of them picked up the other comic books I had, took them home and read them--great! Now they know it exists, and if they want to read anything more, that's great! (Obs 3:7)

With something like the film *Au Revoir les Enfants*, which dealt with powerful themes of relationships among school boys during the Nazi occupation of France, Carl saw more potential for exploration of personal connections:

Interestingly enough, I'm really looking forward--we've almost completed it--I'm really looking forward to the discussion we're going to have about the film [*Au Revoir les Enfants*]. The reason--again, I find myself asking this question: What is there in it for them, in this film? "What if you were in circumstances like this?" "Do you put yourself in circumstances like this, where there's a new boy who comes to school, or there's someone new in class?" "Are you willing to bring him in and make him part of your life, or are you going to find something wrong and push him away?" "Do you do that in your class?" "Do you do that in your life?" That kind of thing. (Curric 3:9)

On the whole, the cultural content of the themes, in Carl's conception, was secondary to the personal growth potential. For example, Carl chose materials for themes not because they allowed for an in-depth exploration of cultural phenomena, but because of their potential for personal connections--for him and for students. In this way, it was not France or French culture during World War II that was the focus, but rather the interpersonal relationships among the characters in the film. Carl's questions in the above excerpt show how he perceived the personal connections.

In fact, personal growth topics--"things that will be of benefit to them as human beings"--was the force behind the cultural themes of the rich tradition of France.

C: . . . I can see the neat thing about creating this program now in everything that we do, I can direct the conversation about the contents back to a concept of self, self-concept, of increasing one's self-concept. For example, in *Au Revoir Les Enfants*, about the importance of getting along with someone else. And what happened in the relationship with the boys toward the end of the film, and what did they notice about that. There are so many things that we can talk about that will be of benefit to them as human beings. I think, maybe subconsciously, that was going on with me when I decided to drop that textbook.

PM: What's that?

C: The idea that there's a lot more that they can gain from this course other than the French part of all of it, and that underneath all of the discussion--you know, we'll talk about the content of the film. We'll talk about who did what, when. Their French will improve, but what I'm looking forward to discussing is: "What is this film really about for you?" "What is the message in this film to you?" And have a conversation about that. Maybe they'll become, maybe their empathy will increase just this much (holds up thumb and index figure in a pinching gesture) by watching this film. Who knows? I feel that there's a lot we can do help students in that regard, and oftentimes, I have to even be careful myself--that I get caught up in the content, rather than the students. I think there are some great possibilities in there. (Curric 2:4)

The interconnectedness of the content components was in play, yet the emphases were not always equal.



## Outcomes

Carl's conception of outcomes derived directly from his conception of content: linguistic, cultural, personal growth, communication. In addition, Carl intended outcomes for the nature of the learning experience. His conceptions of outcomes were also influenced by departmental expectations of learning outcomes or achievements for students in the language program.

When asked to describe what he hoped students would achieve by going through the language program, Carl answered this way:

First of all, to gain an appreciation of another culture. To gain an appreciation that people exist on this planet who aren't quite...who have a lot of differences but it's totally possible for us to exist together, and create great things together on this planet. Secondly, I see this as the development of an obviously linguistic skill, but also the possibility for personal growth, the possibility for increased self-confidence and self-esteem through use of the language. I think that's the component that I wasn't--I think it was happening early--but I wasn't as aware of it earlier. This is an opportunity for you to show that you can do great things, that you can express yourself freely and openly, make mistakes, and all of that. (Curric 1:15)

Here, stated in terms of outcomes, are the three central content components: linguistic, cultural, and personal growth.

Carl also had clear conceptions of outcomes that were not directly derived from the content, but were related to the learning experience. Carl wanted students' learning experience in his language classes to be a positive experience, where students were interested and motivated, where they enjoyed themselves, and where everyone could feel successful.

Let us now examine each of these outcomes in greater detail

### *Linguistic Outcomes*

Carl's conceptions of outcomes in this component involved students developing ability in the four skill areas so that they could express themselves in French and understand French, so that they could communicate with others--in French class, and with native speakers of French through the exchange programs. Carl was also preparing students to be successful on the key examinations in the language program: the Regents exam and the Advanced Placement exam, both of which he saw as skill-based examinations.

As described earlier, Carl viewed students' attempts at self-expression as more important than their use of the correct forms. Throughout the interviews, he referred again and again to his encouragement to students to "go for it," to "let 'er rip" and not worry about getting things exactly right. His intention was to "just lessen the trend toward perfection, and increase communication a little bit more" (Obs 3:11):

A perfect example last week. We were working on object pronouns. *Je l'ai vu, je veux le voir*, and where does "it" go? *Prends-le*, and *ne le prends pas*. "Mr. Harvey, I just don't remember where to put these all the time." And I'm like, "(makes noise with lips) So what?" You know, I don't care. This is the first time we've really spent any time with where to put an object pronoun in a sentence, and I said, "So you don't get it now. Maybe you'll get it later. Don't let it hold you back from speaking French."

I think that's been a big shift for me, that I'm just a lot more into, What's it going to take for us to communicate?, rather than having to get it right. (Obs 3:11)





Despite Carl's shift in emphasis from perfection to communication regarding outcomes, working in the linguistic component still meant that students had to "perform" (Curric 3:17). They had to listen, speak, read, and write.

So every one of those units [on Québec] usually has two sections, and within every section, there's a speaking component, a reading component, a listening component, and a writing component. So they're always working on developing all of them. (Curric 3:17)

However, Carl viewed students' using the language as part of a "process" whereby they gradually developed greater and greater ability.

It calls for me to immediately support them in using the language as much as they possibly can, in taking risks, in being willing to express themselves and make mistakes, in knowing that it's all a process, that they're going to continue to improve daily. (Bio 2:10)

Along these lines, because students' abilities varied, Carl's expectations of the outcomes they might attain varied, as well. One instance of this was Carl's decision to drop his attachment to students' scoring well on the key examinations, and giving over to students the responsibility for doing well, should they choose to do so.

... this week has been about me dropping my own agenda, about how am I going to look if not everybody gets fours and fives on that AP exam? This is a great exercise for me.

PM: What do you mean by that exactly?

C: My own agenda?

PM: Well, dropping it.

C: It goes back to what makes the students successful. Does an exam, a national exam, make them successful? Who gets to decide what makes them successful? When I ask myself that question, then it was easy. The rest of the week has been wonderful, because they're the ones who decide what successful is. If they want to do the work that I'm giving them, they'll be successful. If they choose not to--some are working... Even since Monday that quality of the work has improved, because they know my...the expectations of the AP exam better than they did before. But, some of them won't. Some of them won't work quite as hard, and I think they won't have as much hesitation about seeing a French film as they may have before. I think they'd be a little bit more willing to go in and rent a French film. (Curric 3:6)

By informing AP students of the exam requirements, and by providing them with opportunities to do the necessary work in the linguistic component, Carl had shifted the definitions of successful performance in French to their shoulders. At the same time, he fully recognized that not all students would buckle down to the extra effort required. Notice that when Carl describes these students, his conception of outcomes shifts from the linguistic component to the cultural and personal growth components, namely, that they might open their lives to the possibility of seeing a French film on their own initiative. Being "successful" in French thus took on a different appearance, depending on students' motivations and ability.

Even though he had dropped his agenda for students scoring well, Carl was still concerned with students' performance. He used the word "accountability" to describe this expectation:

I really think that it's important that they be accountable for what we've done in class, that they see what they've accomplished. (Obs 3:19)



This accountability seemed to amount mostly to structured activities in which students had to show what they had learned. One such occasion was an activity Carl did consistently in all his classes, a brief one-on-one exchange between him and a student (or pair of students), where the student had to hold forth in French or engage in conversation with Carl on material they had been working on.

In the following instance, Carl had asked Level 5 students to prepare an oral synopsis of *Le Fantôme de l'Opéra*, using a few focus questions as a guide. Carl was asked about his intended outcomes:

PM: What are you looking for, from them, when they come up to give their monologue?

C: To just express themselves in French in a comprehensible manner, to tell me the story, in this case, to tell me the story in whatever way they could, to mention the main characters. I left it kind of wide open, so that they didn't feel like they were too stuck to anything. I really wanted to hear them speak this time. Sometimes, I have a tendency to interject too much. I interjected for a reason a few time, because I didn't want what they were doing to sound too monotonous, so I threw in a few things.

I'm just looking for progress. I'm looking for something different this time than it was last... That's what was so refreshing this time, was to know that made progress. They communicated in French. That was pretty cool.

PM: Are there signposts for you that indicate progress? Things that stand out, or that are indicative of something?

C: Clearly, facility with tenses, playing with tenses better. Also, vocabulary. It was clear. We did a lot of work with vocabulary with this book, more so than grammar. We worked a lot with word families, antonyms, and synonyms. They must have had, I would say, a thousand words by the time we finished the word families and the opposites, and describing words, and things like that. This is one area that they clearly can be working on, vocabulary development. So I was looking for words from the book, words that they might use, synonyms. *Ils se sont retrouvés*, just things I know they couldn't have gotten from another source, other than this book. It was neat to hear them say, to pick up expressions that they wanted to say. (Obs 2:4)

The call for students to "express themselves in French in a comprehensible manner" was Carl's expectation, along with their specific use of material covered in class, their "facility" with verb tenses and with vocabulary from the play. For Carl, students' use of these linguistic components was a sign of "progress."

Seeing signs of progress was not exclusive to Carl, however. He wanted students to make this assessment on their own, as well. In fact, at the end of the one-on-one exchange in this particular activity, he asked students to give themselves a grade on their performance. The outcome, from the students' perspective, was two-fold: 1) they were asked to be accountable for what they had learned by performing it with Carl; 2) they were given the responsibility of assessing their performance.

I think, first of all, in that regard, their getting, their understanding, that they're always in a state of progress, that whatever they do, they're better than they were yesterday. If there's anything I can do to support them in understanding that they're making progress, then I feel like I've succeeded in some way. There are some who have, I think, some difficulty in believing that they're doing great. They're making progress. Compared to where they were in September, they're clearly improving. I think it gives them the opportunity to see that they are.

They, ultimately, are the ones who have to choose that--if they're making progress, if they're happy with where they are. I can tell them, but this is something, another goal I'd like to have with them is to stop relying so much on what the teacher thinks, and start trusting their own





ability, and what they're able to do. They still have a lot of trouble dealing with the fact that I'd rather not give them the grade. I'd rather they give themselves the grade. You know, if they have a 90, that's great. If they think they deserve a 90, we can talk about it a little bit. (Obs 2:4)

I'm trying to get away from marking down when they make errors, and marking every single thing down. I'm just trying to sit there and be involved in their conversation. What I've decided to do now, particularly with those kids [Level 5] and moreso with the 10Rs, is find maybe one thing that they can be working on. Here, you might want to take a look at this. I remember doing the difference between *avant que* and *après que*, you know, something like that. Just take a look at one thing, because I think that when they see a paper with all these marks--this is wrong and this is wrong--it's a little deflating. So, how I'm looking at it now is: take one thing with you, this is what I saw, and maybe you can work on this for the next time.

Also, the idea of grades, to get them a lot more involved in how they thought they did, rather than what my version of how they did. For them to see their own progress, rather than my looking at my perception of how they did is. That's clearly something that we have to continue working on. (Obs 2:4)

Another feature of using the language had to do with the amount of French actually used in class, as opposed to English. According to Carl, this was an ongoing topic of discussion among teachers in the department. It was his impression that more could be done in the target language. This year, as part of his mission to disprove the stigma about the abilities of the Regents track, he had set increased use of French in class as a long-term outcome:

I'm making a bigger shift in using more language in the classroom, and they're going to be amazed. By the end of the year, my goal is that it'll be a hundred percent, that we will not use English in the classroom. (Obs 2:8)

In his conception of linguistic outcomes, Carl was looking for students to use the language to express themselves, to communicate, to not worry about making mistakes, and to develop confidence in their use of French. These outcomes, however, varied according to students and their abilities.

### *Cultural Outcomes*

The cultural component consisted of two aspects, knowledge about the culture, and the exchange program. Up until this year, travel abroad and a homestay experience was only available to Level 4 or 5 students. With the addition of the Québec program for the 10Rs, an exchange was now available to students who would not otherwise be able to participate. Adding the Québec curriculum reflected Carl's conceptions of cultural outcomes.

For the most part, the cultural component involved students' gaining knowledge about small c and capital C culture, and comparing this with their own. Here, too, Carl intended more than mastery of the information:

I think we often talk about the differences between, and the similarities, between the French and the American, or the Canadians and the Americans. Yesterday, for example, we were talking about the Canadian dollar, you know, and the difference between the exchange rates, and the price of things up there, and getting them a little bit more in tune that other societies exist beyond our own, and to take a look at how other people live, so that they can develop some kind of empathy at least for how other people live. (Bio 2:2)



However, the intention in positioning the exchange programs at the center of the these curricula was "to make the language come alive" through students' direct contact with the culture and relationships with the people there:

C: . . . I think since I've been involved in second language education, what's made it work was, first of all, my interest in it being more than just learning a language. That it be my interest in helping them to create relationships, or to create some kind of personal contact, which really makes the language come alive.

PM: Relationships with people.

GA: People, yeah. Whether it...In the early years, it was trips abroad, and you know, pen pals, and things like that. The more work I do, the more I see the importance of making it as real and as true to life as possible. So when these kids, for example, who are...these sophomores who are in French Two, they're not just learning to say "How are you?" and "What's going on?" and all this stuff, that it's really going to come alive because the Canadians will be able to come down here, and they'll be able to go up there. It'll really happen. (Bio 1:2)

It will really happen. Having done the homestay program for over ten years, Carl spoke from experience. He had witnessed its impact on students long after they left high school.

To go back to what I was talking about before, to see that language can really come alive, that they can have a really positive experience out of just...out of learning it. There really are people out there who really are French, who you can really talk to, and you can get along with, and do something with. (Bio 1:10)

It's a lot of work organizing excursions, and having the French kids be in class, and all that. But the rewards are just so incredible out of that. You know, there are kids today that still have contacts in France, who still go over. It's just so cool to get a postcard from somebody who went in the class of '84 or '85. You know, I was just on the Riviera and wanted to write you a note. That's the kind of stuff that's so great. (Bio 1:12)

Carl's longer view, the fact that some students did go on to maintain or further their connections with France and the French, seemed a powerful factor in this conception of outcomes. He mentioned a young woman who eventually married a Frenchman. He talked about a family in the community whose three sons had all participated in the exchange and hosted French visitors.

In addition to the outcomes of relationships and friendships, Carl saw other outcomes, particularly for those students who would not continue with French:

But many of these kids will never be language majors, or do much with French. If anything, I can at least to help to develop some kind of interest in traveling, or they could feel confident in getting out of this area and going up to Québec. Or, maybe some time in their life going to Europe, or feeling comfortable...What it might also be a lot about is getting along with others. You know, really. They might not remember any French at all, but we do a ton of group activities, team activities, and working with pairs. (Bio 1:6)

So, at the very least, they'll have great memories. At the very most, they might be able to create a friendship. Or they might gain an appreciation of an area beyond this zip code.

And if they never speak French again in their lives, and they say, "Wow you know, I remember I had a really good time when I was in high school, and we went up to Montreal. Let's take the family up to Montreal. Let's go up there for the weekend." That it gets them beyond what they consider as being safe. Safe is home. Safe is this school. Safe is this community. That they can experience life more fully, the more experiences they have. (Bio 3:10)





In the above listing, the outcomes range from creation of a friendship, to an appreciation of another area, to great memories, to stepping outside the safety of known surroundings into difference, fostering interest and confidence in travel, even getting along with classmates and family. All of these seemed to have equal weight for Carl, in terms of his expectations of students. He seemed at ease with the prospect of students coming away from the exchange program with different outcomes.

Carl's view of students at this age also tempered his view of what the experience was about for them:

There are a lot of them who have some trepidation about being fifteen, going up to Québec, and living with a family, or something like that. I think it's a great exercise in them taking a risk, and dealing with some of the fears they have around--not only living with a family who doesn't speak English as a first language--but just living with another family. (Bio 3:10)

Taking risks, dealing with one's trepidation and fear--all dimensions that relate to personal growth, it would appear.

All in all, the intended outcomes for the cultural component covered a lot of territory. At a fundamental level, Carl was interested in students' coming away with information about France or Québec, and recognizing differences that existed between these places and the U.S., what he termed "an increased cultural awareness" (Curric 3:11). Also, he wanted students "to gain an appreciation for another culture" (Curric 1:15), respect for these differences, "some kind of empathy at least for how other people live" (Bio 2:2). For those who journeyed on the exchange program, he was also interested in students developing relationships, creating friendships.

### *Personal Growth Outcomes*

The line of demarcation between personal growth outcomes and cultural outcomes was not always sharply defined, as the preceding excerpts illustrate. The cultural experience of a homestay could produce outcomes that were clearly cultural in nature, such as a friendship, or appreciation of another culture. On the other hand, developing an interest in travel, getting along with others, or greater self-understanding through confrontation of one's fears did enter personal growth territory. Likewise, the linguistic outcome of expressing oneself, taking risks, and accepting one's mistakes was within the realm of personal growth.

Carl did clearly draw a distinction, however, in talking about it as one of three intended outcomes for his French courses. As he described it, personal growth was about an "ever-improving sense of self" (Bio 1:2), emphasizing self-esteem, creation of new possibilities for one's life, relations with others, even "development of character" (Bio 1:7).

Such outcomes did not need to have anything whatsoever to do with French itself. Recall the example of the student who decided to take a risk and attend a larger, more distant college, which Carl cited as an instance of a successful outcome from his work with this student. Nonetheless, all Carl's work in this component was set solidly within the context of learning French and learning about Francophone culture. It's just that his personal growth outcomes did not depend on linguistic or cultural content.



Carl spelled out the connections in this way:

C: . . . I think since I've been involved in second language education, what's made it work was, first of all, my interest in it being more than just learning a language. That it be my interest in helping them to create relationships, or to create some kind of personal contact, which really makes the language come alive. . . .

. . . the whole idea of...what I mentioned before about creating relationship. But also creating confidence, and creating a sense of improving self-esteem through learning language.

PM: That's what you're trying to do with your students.

C: That's first now. I would even say the whole idea of creating an ever-improving sense of self is first. Out of creating this sense of self, then the relationships with people in other countries can be developed. (Bio 1:2)

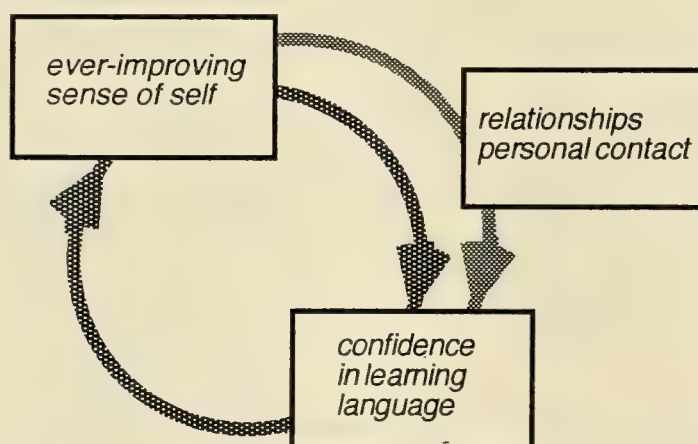


Figure 36: Personal Growth Outcomes

First came the work on developing confidence and self-esteem in learning French, contributing to the ever-improving sense of self. This laid the groundwork for the opportunities for relationships.

I think it's important at every level to develop the kind of...a sense of self, a sense of confidence, first in speaking the language. (Bio 2:14)

The concept of students' developing "sense of self" appeared constantly in Carl's statements throughout the interviews. At the core was self-confidence, self-esteem, even "empowerment" (Bio 1:4; Obs 2:5), reflected in students' willingness to take risks, make mistakes, pick themselves up and go on to create new possibilities in their lives.

I would say that it's a lot about the freedom to speak up, the freedom to make mistakes, the freedom to just go for it. You know, I think we have...that's a great opportunity that we have in the language classroom, that we often don't see in schools, that you know, "Try this. Go for it. And if you make a mistake, that's great. It's OK." It's almost like little lessons of life. That's what I've seen lately.

It's just really neat to have a class of students that seem to be a little bit, maybe reticent, you know to try anything in the beginning. I think my Advanced Placement class is like that this year. Kind of reticent in the beginning to speak, or anything like that. Just to see what effect...what can I do that might have something to do with creating some self-esteem for them? Or creating some more empowering...empowerment for them, so that when they go to France





in April, maybe their French won't be so great, but at least they'll get a better sense of who they are and that by making mistakes, by trying over and over again, that we improve. (Bio 1:4)

Carl's experience with the Level 5 students of the previous year seemed to capture the essence of the potential in personal growth outcomes. He had taught these students for four years, from Level 2 through Level 5 and had accompanied them on the exchange to France.

I think...last year's senior class was probably the combination of the whole thing, and maybe during one of our sessions, I can show you some of the things that they wrote to me. What was really touching about it was that I know that a lot of these kids are much more interested in...Some of them want to be doctors, a lot of science and math, and they're brilliant in everything that they do. I mean, they were such an easy class to handle last year. But teaching them French really ended up being...it ended up being French, but it ended up being a lot more about the development of character. The development of relationships, and how to get along with people, and things like that. So the neat thing is...They took me out to dinner at the end, or when they wrote in my yearbook, it was...It wasn't so much thanks about French. They did. But it was a lot about, you know, Thanks for helping me to get along better with people in my class or with my family. So we did a lot of real, honest sharing, too. (Bio 1:7)

During the course of these interviews, three of these students telephoned Carl late one night. He described what happened and what it meant:

... they were seniors, so they're freshmen in Virginia this year. They just called me. They said, "Oh Mr. Harvey, we were thinking of you. We just wanted to call and say hi, and how are you doing." Although it was really late, it was like, Wow. It was really neat that they called. Not one of them is a French major. Two out of three are taking French, but two want to be doctors, and one wants to be a lawyer. So, it was really great hearing...and I thought, after I hung up the phone with them: what did they take with them out of high school?

I think they took a good deal of French--they did great on the AP exam--but I think they took some other things which are just as important. You see, I had these kids for four years, and they got really close toward the end. I think there was a nice bond, a nice relationship created out of that group, for kids from three different universities to get together and spend time with each other. I don't know if it was created out of...these were kids who went to France, and these were in French class, but I can't help but think that it somehow contributed to their getting along with each other. If they don't remember word of French, I'm really happy they get along with each other now, and that something is going right. (Curric 2:4)

Personal growth outcomes, then, although grounded in learning French, clearly transcended French and French culture, in Carl's view.

### *Learning Experience Outcomes*

The outcomes for the learning experience were students' involvement, interest, and motivation. Carl characterized this as the creation of an "atmosphere" in the classroom.

I think it's important at every level to develop the kind of...a sense of self, a sense of confidence, first in speaking the language. If I can't provide an atmosphere--let me say, it's important for me to provide an atmosphere where they can feel free to express themselves. I think that's what I was alluding to at the last session. That it's totally OK to get up in front of this room and speak French, and it's totally OK to make a lot of mistakes. If I don't provide that atmosphere, then it's only understandable that they'll sit back, and they won't go for it.

I guess what I'm saying is that if I develop that in the early years, when they first are here in high school, that they're ready for more advanced work when they're seniors. But if these are students that I haven't had before, again, it's them knowing from me, that I am totally accepting of them making mistakes, and getting back up and going for it again. I'm the one who creates that atmosphere in the classroom. (Bio 2:14)



Carl saw it as his responsibility to create this kind of atmosphere where students felt free to take risks. There were two key features of such an atmosphere:

I think the shift, the positive aspect for me, was about that nothing very positive is going to happen academically unless, one, they're feeling successful, and two, they're enjoying what they're doing. (Obs 1:3)

In terms of students enjoying the learning experience, Carl used one word again and again to characterize what he intended: "fun."

. . . that's what's so neat about having these supposed, and I would say this in quotes, "slower-paced learners" [10R students]. I am glad that I have them now. What can I do to foster their interest and their motivation? It's fun! I mean, they have... "What do you think of French?" "Oh, it's fun!" I said, "Great!" If it's fun for them, then maybe they'll try things. Maybe they'll do things. If it's not fun, then (Bronx cheer noise). It's not fun, it's not easy to learn things. So we have a lot of fun. (Bio 2:18)

Fun was not simply an end in itself, but rather a means to foster students' interest and motivation, their willingness to do things in French. For Carl, what mattered most was evoking in students a desire to speak French in the first place:

. . . what does one want them to be able to do? I hope, speak French! And understand French when it's spoken. If they speak it correctly, that's great! But first, make sure that they speak it at all, and that they want to speak it, and that they're encouraged to speak it. (Obs 3:13)

### *Summary*

Carl's overall conception of outcomes operated in large part from his conceptions of students and their abilities and interest in French. A bottom line outcome was that students leave with a positive feeling.

My intention for them is to leave this school feeling positive about the study of French, or French culture, or French civilization, not necessarily about being stellar language students. If they're stellar language students, that's phenomenal. I'm very happy that they're that, but not all of them will be. (Curric 3:6)

But I also think that the general theme is: I would like them to graduate from this school with an appreciation of French that might not look like a continuation of study in the language. (Curric 3:22)

Again, just like with the seniors, if they [10R students] graduate . . . with a knowledge of French, and are real interested in maybe going to Québec some time, or maybe traveling to France, or saying to their sons and daughters, "I remember when I took French and it was a really neat experience. I not only learned a lot, but I had a good time. It was fun." (Obs 3:10)

Thus linguistic performance was not necessarily a primary outcome, nor was an understanding or appreciation of French culture. Carl was after an "appreciation that might not look like a continuation of study in the language." In fact, Carl characterized French as very much a secondary outcome in his overall intentions, as a "by-product":

Now, French happens as a function of the relationships, of the friendships, of everything. French is like a by-product now of what I'm attempting to create. The idea of enjoying it, that life doesn't have to be so hard, that you can have some fun. It doesn't have to be hard. (Bio 3:15)

But, I think as time has worn on, I think French is a by-product of a lot of other things. French comes easily when they like what they're doing, when there's an interest developed. If I can show them, you know, how enthusiastic I am about it, and what I see is possible out of it...it may be something like bringing in letters that I get from my friends, or bringing in friends that





I've met, or people that I know. Showing them pictures that...you know, "This stuff can actually happen in your life. That we can make this stuff happen if we want to." So I think it's about: "How much are you willing to make happen in your life?" (Bio 1:6)

Recognizing that most students in his classes will not likely continue their study of French beyond high school, Carl shifted his intended outcomes from performance in French to relationships, friendships, enjoyment of learning, and openness to making new things happen in students' lives.

Again, though, what's the purpose of what I'm doing? What's my intention in all this? We've talked about this several times. If reading *Astérix*, if they had a good time doing it--we had fun, they laughed a lot, and several of them picked up the other comic books I had, took them home and read them--great! Now they know it exists, and if they want to read anything more, that's great! Music: clearly, if they like something in the songs I record, maybe they'll buy one in France, maybe they'll buy Céline Dion sings Palmodon (?) here. Maybe there will be something else they'll like to do. So, again, it's a question of priorities. It's a question of intention. It's real casual, I think, now that they're seniors, that they leave this high school with a positive feeling about their study of French. I'm interested in them continuing in some way, and if it doesn't look like it's going to be studying French in college, maybe they'll gain something out of one of the aspects of this Rich Tradition that we're doing, that they'll continue to do. (Obs 3:7)

At the same time, Carl did expect students to perform in French and to demonstrate an understanding of French culture. After all, he did assign grades, and students did need to perform in order to succeed on the Regents examination and on the Advanced Placement exam. For those "stellar language students" in his classes and others who wished to excel, the opportunities to achieve in the linguistic component were certainly there. For the others, the majority, the primary outcomes shifted to the personal growth component.

| This chart I found to be very apropos of how I feel about things. (Epilogue: 5/3/96)

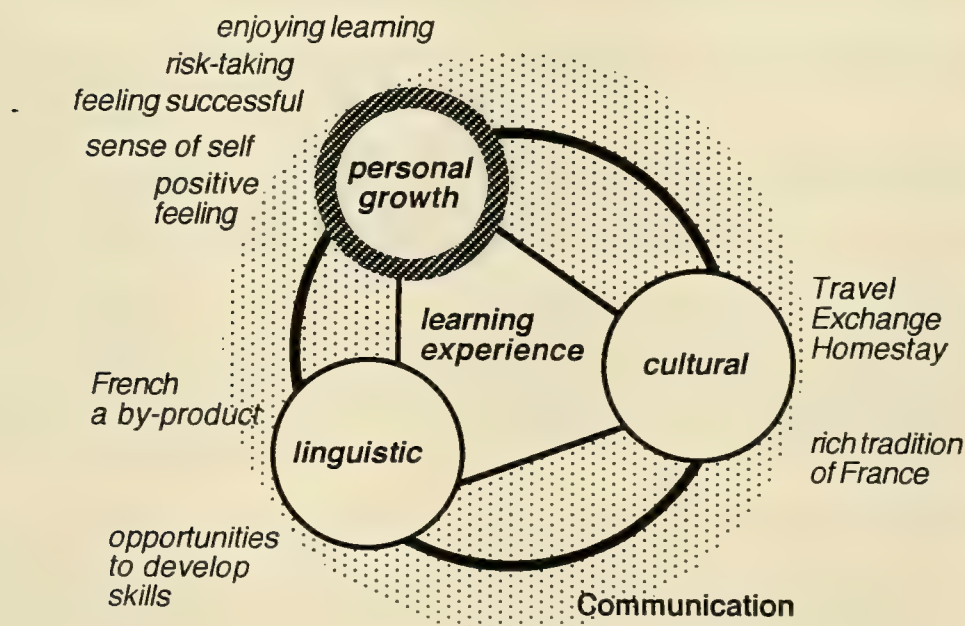


Figure 37: Interplay of Outcomes



Figure 37 illustrates the interplay of these outcomes.

*I noticed that [this] summary was very great. It summarizes very much what I feel about the outcomes, with their having a positive language experience, and that they leave the school with an appreciation of the second language, even if it meant that they weren't going to continue its study, that they would have a positive feeling about it. That was really well said, in my point of view. (Epilogue: 5/3/96)*

## Activities

Carl's conceptions of activities, as with the other dimensions, was intertwined with content and outcomes, and his conception of his role as guide. Carl had a systematic view of instruction, with a predictable sequence of learning activities, which he carried out in both the 10R classes and the Level 5 class. Carl employed a variety of learning activities that featured active student participation and small group work.

In this section, rather than a comprehensive list of the activities Carl used, I will describe his conception of activities in three areas: the four skills, the sequence of activities he employed, and a culminative activity that showcased much of his thinking about learning activities, The Real World video activity.

### The Four Skills

Carl organized his activities on a weekly basis, with more or less prescribed foci for each day of the week. The activities were further organized by work on each of the four skill areas.

... weekly, for example, in all my classes, there is a listening comprehension exercise. There is... They speak every week. They have to write some kind of note, or they do some kind of reading every week. So there's opportunity in every area to do well. I think it's a lot more balanced now than it used to be. I clearly didn't do as much with listening comprehension as I do now. It seems to be a skill that a lot of them can develop quite easily. (Curric 2:11)

Carl consistently referred to learning activities in terms of the skill areas, as illustrated in the above statement. He described the Québec curriculum for the 10R class in this way:

So every one of those units usually has two sections, and within every section, there's a speaking component, a reading component, a listening component, and a writing component. So they're always working on developing all of them. (Curric 3:17)

He described the activities for the Level 5 class on the topic of film in the same manner:

I think the nice thing about AP is whatever we do to increase their speaking, to increase their comprehension, whatever way we do it is fine. There is no one set curriculum. So, in setting up this unit on film, we'll spend a week watching the film. Every day toward the end of class, they'll write about it. In the beginning of class, they'll reflect upon what they saw the previous day in speaking with a partner. Obviously, it's a wonderful comprehension exercise, watching a film. So I think anything, one can do anything in an upper level class. (Curric 2:3)

And his rationale for working with a list of vocabulary with the same class also showed this skill-based conception of activities:

Can I increase their ability to speak French a little just from a list of vocabulary? Can they demonstrate that they know maybe how this would have occurred in the story from the use of this vocabulary? Can they maybe, by listening, improve their ability to communicate in French a little bit more, instead of saying, *Elle a commencé à pleurer*, to start using, *Elle s'est mise à a* little bit more. So basically it's: how many skills can I hope to develop in one activity, and very





importantly in all of that, will it keep their interest? Is it something that's going to either prove how successful they were in the week--because we've done a lot of vocabulary. They are clearly in need of vocabulary for both their reading comprehension and for self-expression. I think this book (Phantom of the Opéra) is perfect for developing those skills with these kids. (Obs 1:2)

The activities were designed to provide students with opportunities to practice these skills:

Yes, dialogue practice. Right. I think it's real important for these [10R] students to constantly be in a state of revision, of review. It's real easy for me to get caught into what we are presently doing, so they almost do some kind of speaking exercise weekly. Sometimes they're as directive as this one is. Sometimes they're real open-ended. But I was real intent, since they were away for almost all of last week on Thanksgiving, to get back that business about remembering something that they did in Montreal, and remembering all the work that we did with the *passé composé*, and all of that stuff. I was trying to make it something where I could combine the things that we had done in the past with a little bit of what was going on presently. So that's why the dialogue happened. (Obs 1:3)

Along these lines, Carl recounted how he decided to help Level 5 students practice their writing skills to the point where they could do well on the AP exam:

C: . . . This week it's been very interesting for me. I read one of their first writing samples out of seeing the film, and many of them were bluuuh! (sound of disgust). They just weren't of the level that I thought they would be. It was very interesting, because I had to really take a look at: Hmm, how are we going to do this so that they're successful in French, too? Because a lot of them signed up for the AP exam. . . .

When I came back Monday, this past Monday, after I read their first compositions, I was really kind of tight. I said, "We really have a lot of work to do on this."

PM: You said that to yourself?

C: No, to them. We have a lot of work to do on our writing, and it wasn't coming out of love and a kind heart. It was like, "Holy Smokes, we've got a lot to do here." . . .

If they want to do the work that I'm giving them, they'll be successful. If they choose not to--some are working... Even since Monday that quality of the work has improved, because they know my...the expectations of the AP exam better than they did before. . . .

They write a page each evening about the film, and I correct every single paper, write every single correction, and hand it back. Then, if they wish, they re-write and hand it back again. If they wish. . . . See, at the end--like Tuesday before vacation--they're going to write about the film, one paper about the film. They'll be able to take all the corrections, all the papers the night before and look them through. If they've been doing the re-writes, I have a feeling that what they write on Tuesday will be of higher quality than if they didn't do the re-writes. (Curric 3:12)

This excerpt shows the varied activities Carl used for helping students develop the writing skills they needed to be successful on the AP exam.

### *Activity Sequence*

Carl followed a basic sequence for both classes, based on his conception of "completion" of material. This involved a cycle of introduction of material, practice, and some kind of assessment--all set within a particular time period. Carl consciously chose and sequenced content and activities in relation to time periods. When asked what "complete something" meant for the Level 5 class, Carl answered this way:



Completing it means completing the reading and always speaking about it, whether it be individually with me or with a partner. (Obs 3:4)

In fact, the "speaking about it" was the culminating activity. Essentially, this involved students in some kind of individual interaction with Carl, whether singly or in pairs.

Carl's conception of completion, or "doing something" was highly organized and systematic for the 10 R class, where he had established an activity sequence based on 5-day cycles. For the Level 5 class, there were no 5-day cycles. Carl described how he decided on using French comic books for a short period in January for the Level 5 class:

PM: I noticed also one thing that seemed like it might be different from what we talked about before, and that was the fact that you were working with *Astérix*. I was wondering where the decision to work with that came from.

C: I think that came out of a function, more out of the time factor, that I really wanted to complete something. This is just a very bizarre couple of weeks for us. We've had one complete week in January, and that's it. We have four days this week, three days another week, four days another week, and one day next week. It was hard for me to find anything that I could pull together that was complete. After Christmas, I don't know, I just decided that it was very choppy to do what I had originally planned. I was going to start *Carmen*, but I'll do that later, when we have a larger group of time. . . .

I'm sure there are people who could have started a novel after Christmas vacation, and not finished it necessarily in a period of time, had a week's vacation, and gone back to the novel. I just have found, in my many years of teaching, that that doesn't seem to work well, that they often forget, and that their interest level decreases, depending upon the class. I am just very much into...if you've got a three-week period, then what can you find that will hold together for three weeks.

We have another three weeks before February vacation, and I've decided to do some work with music, with some French singers, and listening to music and understanding what they've sung. I've transcribed some songs, and left blanks, and had them listen to things like that. They need a lot of work with the listening comprehension. Then, after February vacation, we have a long period of time, where I'll be able to do a novel, and or *Carmen*.

So, for me, I really feel good about fitting in what will work in a particular period of time. (Obs 3:3-4)

This notion of "what will hold together" or "what will work in a particular period of time" seemed a central feature of Carl's conception of activities.

This was clearly evident in the 10R class. As outlined previously, each unit in the Québec curriculum consisted of an A and B section, and a culminating activity. Sections were taught in five-day cycles, normally Monday through Friday.

Again, the whole objective is that after two weeks, each of those sections has an A and a B, the third week--that's really not on there--is when they perform. So they put all this together. For me, the third week is when things are most important. They put it together and they do their dialogue. (Curric 3:17)

Thus the 10R units were normally taught in a three- or four-week time block, with activities based on the four skills, culminating in a synthesis activity where students had to perform what they had learned. It should be noted that this organization was quite similar to the activity format in the textbook series, which also had three to four sections to a chapter, along with a synthesis section at the end.





Carl described how evaluation figured into this activity sequence:

A unit, let's say, has usually two or three sections. We just finished this unit on Québec, where they had a reading selection to do. We did some cultural stuff about Québec, major attractions, places to visit, things like that. We did a grammatical concept, with pronouns and things like that. They pretty much have a quiz, a weekly quiz, where there's a listening component, a reading component, and a writing component--weekly. Every several weeks, there must be--at least in my point of view--there has to be some kind of speaking component, so that, I would say out of fifteen grades a quarter, they have four, five, or six speaking components, where they actually do a dialogue, where they come up and speak with me. Then, there are thrown in, like during the week, there's always a listening component, a listening evaluation. I'll read the reading comprehension selection to them before they actually see it, so that we always have...I'm just real conscious of varying them, but I also think that they need some kind of pattern to things. They're pretty much used to on the fifth day of a cycle, usually there will be some kind of fifteen or twenty minute quiz. (Obs 3:17)

As Carl saw it, students needed "some kind of pattern to things," and the sequence of activities and his expectations for their work in them were part of this pattern.

As for the synthesis activities, they thus occurred roughly once a month for about a week. During this week, Carl had two sets of activities in operation: one-on-one meetings with him, and an ongoing small group task: preparation of a video script in French, patterned after the Real World series on MTV. Both these activities focused on students' reviewing the material of the previous week. While Carl called students up to work with him for a few minutes, the rest of the class worked in small groups on their video scripts. He described what this was all about:

I'm really happy that I have the opportunity, one, for them to demonstrate that they can use the language, so that I can listen to them personally. I can acknowledge them for the work that they do once every three or four weeks. That's one of the reasons, just to give them some strokes every once and a while, because I'm up there teaching so much, I'd really like to have the opportunity to say some personal things to them. Secondly, I really like the idea, every three or four weeks, of them being responsible for work that's totally their own, that has nothing to do with me. That's why I really like these video scripts. It wraps up the unit that we've been working on, and it's a hundred percent their stuff. (Obs 2:7)

This organization and sequence were critical features of Carl's conception of activities. Because students were occupied with the tasks of the Real World activity, Carl was able to pull individual students out for one-on-one exchanges.

### *The Real World*

This activity is worth illustrating in some detail, because it not only held together Carl's instruction for the year, but it also brought together many important dimensions of his conceptions of teaching French.

Briefly, this activity consisted of student-produced video tapes of scenarios of their own creation. These scenarios were modeled on the MTV series, Real World, a documentary of six young Americans in a communal living situation in a large U.S. city. The story line, so to speak, is the unfolding adventures of their real lives as they go about their business in the city, and their evolving relationships with one another. The cast represent a mix of races, ethnicities, genders, sexual preferences, education, and professional interests. This was a television program that all students, and Carl, watched and liked. Students worked in groups of six or so, created characters of their own, and wrote scripts in which the characters interacted,



using the themes and the French they had learned in class for the previous three weeks.

Students worked on a "scene" during the synthesis week, roughly one week per month, writing a minimum of 40 to 50 lines of dialogue. At the mid-term, halfway through the academic year, students actually produced a video tape of all the scenes they had written, playing the roles, carrying out the action. They produced a second video tape at the end of the school year.

Carl used this activity for a number of reasons. In this extended interview excerpt, he explains:

PM: . . . Why this activity? What does it do?

C: First of all, as I had mentioned before, it gets them working with each other. I love to hear everyone talking and laughing, and working together. I don't think there's a lot of that going on in our nation's schools today.

"What can I do to help my group be successful?" That, I would say, would be first. Second, "How can I use what I've learned in French these past couple weeks?" "How can I use it again?" "What's another way I can use it?" "I use it in quizzes all the time. I'm using it in this dialogue I'm doing at the table [with Carl]. Here's another way I can put to use what I've learned. This can be even more creative. This is something I can clearly have fun with. We can joke around, and we can spill our soup, and we can lose our wallets."

They can actually create something novel, that's totally, one hundred percent their own, and let it go, and have fun! I'm not giving them a mid-term this year. Instead, the production of this video is the mid-term. That's how Mr. Harvey is loosening up. It wasn't easy.

PM: The production, you mean the final product?

C: Yeah. Them getting together with their team and spending a day, an afternoon, or whatever it takes together to produce the first half.

PM: They videotape it themselves?

C: Yes, they do the whole thing.

PM: So this is outside class. They bring the video to you.

C: It used to be, Mr. Harvey drives around with a video camera and does it, and Mr. Harvey starts getting real frustrated with...then I said, "Wait a minute. They wrote it. They're acting in it. They can produce it." So I made sure there was at least a video camera in every group. So during this Regents week, when they don't really have any strong commitments to be in school, unless they have an exam and another class, that's when they'll get together. It's a real good exercise in teamwork.

PM: This, then, is their mid-term. Meaning...?

C: Meaning the first day back of the second semester, "Let's play these babies, and let's see what it looks like." It's fascinating. They did one last year at the end of the year. This is much better. I was too constricting. What I told them to do was too restrictive. I should have given them free rein last year, like I am this year. They love it. These kids, now that they know me, they know that I can go pretty far with things. It's great to see them use their imagination and creativity, and I love some of the ideas that are floating around.





PM: What are you looking for in those videos? It's the same question I asked you about the one-on-one.

C: Yeah, I think, you know, we can talk concepts. How are they doing with the concepts we've worked on in French? How are they playing with *passé composé*? How are they playing with object pronouns, and all those things we've been working on? How are they using a lot of the common expressions that they've learned from way back? Are they re-working old material? And, are they having fun? Are they having a good time? Because they learn a lot more when they're having fun, I'll tell you. So, that's pretty much what I'm looking for. Putting the language together in their own original way.

PM: Why The Real World?

C: Because they all know it. They all know it. I love it. It's such a cool concept.

PM: Oh, you know it yourself?

C: Oh yeah. I watch it every week. It is just, like, putting six people... and for them to make up totally their character. They can be anybody they want to.

PM: They choose one of those characters on...

C: No. They can totally make up their persona. They can be anybody. They can make up who they want. They can make up their age. They can be anyone. It's just fascinating to see what they do.

PM: What's the connection to The Real World, then?

C: That they're all living together. They're all living together and they do different things together, like the last thing was shopping. So they all went shopping together. What happened when went shopping? Certain of them had certain personalities. You know, what do you have to do to get along with each other? That kind of stuff. I said, "It's OK right now. It's mid-term. It's getting near mid-term. It's cool with me that you don't get along with each other, but by the end, I want you to work something out in your videos."

PM: By the end of...?

C: The year. They do one at mid-term, and they do one at the end of the year.

PM: Same characters?

C: Yeah. The characters continue throughout the year.

PM: Oh, I see. So it's a cumulative...

C: Oh yeah. Every unit, it's the same characters but in a different situation.

PM: Based on the material you've been working on.

GA: Yeah.

...

PM: What do you do with their scripts, when they hand them in?

C: I just correct them. I don't see any reason for them to... for all the times they're going to have to practice this, when they have cue cards and video, I would like them to say it as correctly as possible on the video, because there are a lot of things they want to say that they're not quite ready to do yet. A lot of the "I want you to's"--subjunctive--we haven't done that yet. It's coming up, so I helped them out with that. . . .



PM: What is it about Real World that appeals to you, or appeals to making this application?

C: Because it's easily adaptable to French. They can do...It works into any situation. The friends go shopping together. The friends go to the movies together. The friends go to the restaurant together. It's easily applicable to any situation. It carries through. There's a nice continuum throughout the year, I think, with it. Oh, I don't know, and it's fun. When we watch them, everybody's... you know in *Au Revoir Les Enfants*, where all the boys--for all their differences, the whole effect, they're in the war, and they show that Charlie Chaplin film, do you remember that scene? They're all together in there, and they're all laughing. There's just a real sense of community, and they're all one. It's the same thing when we show these videos.

I support them in being silly. I support them in being outrageous in these, because it's just so refreshing. The day we show them, they're so excited, and we're all laughing. It's just so nuts to see in a school! There's not a lot of laughing that goes on, I don't think, in school. I just... I think it's important to have some fun, too.

So, that's why we do The Real World.

PM: OK. Maybe I'll have to take a look at it, just out of curiosity. It sounds like there are some elements in it that reflect some of your own values.

C: Oh, yeah.

PM: From what I've heard, just the brief description of the...

C: Oh, clearly. After the first one, they developed certain characters. This one's this, and this one's that. This one does this, and lots of different things. I said, "If you're going to deal with certain... if you're going to start stereotyping, that's OK. We human beings do that, but what I'm interested in is that by the end of the year, this get resolved. What are you going to do to resolve what you think that certain people are like?" So, there's an undercurrent of that in this whole thing.

...

PM: Does that happen in The Real World, the MTV program?

C: Well, sometimes it does, and sometimes it doesn't.

PM: There are relationship issues?

C: There are clearly relationship issues. Some people get along, and some people don't, and what has to happen for people to get along, and things like that. So there's a fair amount of processing on things like that. So, that's another goal in doing this. It doesn't play as large a role as I would like. I would like to spend more time on issues like this, but with the constraints of curriculum, and you know, it is a French class. I've got to keep remembering that. It is a French class. (Obs 2:9-13)

Many of Carl's conceptions emerged in this account of the Real World activity. Among the key features:

- linguistic content

The content was a clear focus, with work on the grammar points, the vocabulary, and the communicative functions, as well as the four skills. The emphasis was on students performing in French. The format easily accommodated the content.

- cultural content

The scene was set in the culture. In the case of the 10Rs, the title of the video was "Real World--Québec". In the assignment for the third scene, students had to include the following:





1- information about sites you've visited in Montréal and your impressions

2- a restaurant scene where you demonstrate knowledge of foods, beverages  
(Real World assignment: 19-21 Dec 94)

- personal growth

The emphasis was on students' using their imaginations to create something that was entirely their own. There was the importance of working together with others, getting along. In addition, they were asked to work through and resolve any relationship issues with their characters, such as stereotyping.

- learning experience

It was fun. Students enjoyed themselves. There was a lot of laughing. When the videos were shown, there was a sense of community in the class.

- teacher role

Carl provided guidance, structuring the activity and the content parameters, correcting their written drafts, but granting students freedom to create. He was thus able to help students feel successful.

- student role

The students were encouraged to "put the language together in their own original way," to use their creativity and imagination. Carl had given responsibility to the students, trusting them to do the work.

I'm very impressed that--particularly the 10Rs--that they would...I really liked how well they went through their dialogues, when they came up and spoke French. I also liked how they got to work. What I really liked, especially about the class that you saw, is that they can create a high level of energy, that they can have fun, and still get their work accomplished. I really like the real, pervasive positiveness that goes on that period in particular, fourth period. They just really seem to get to it, laugh a lot, and everyone's happy. (Obs 2:1)

## **Context**

Carl's conception of context seemed to center on the domains that related most his work: students, colleagues in the Department, and to a lesser extent, school administration, and the community. Also, the larger context of the New York State Board of Education exerted a strong influence on conceptions of content and outcomes. In terms of teaching French, colleagues exerted a significant influence on his thinking, as described in his roles as supportive colleague and program advocate (earlier in this chapter).

## **State Guidelines**

As described, the state requirements for foreign language study and the Regents Diploma directly affected the curriculum. Because of the nature of the community and the school, foreign language

Most of the students--there are a lot of facets to acquiring a Regents Diploma--but many of the students can have a sequence in languages in order to fulfill the requirements of the Regents Diploma. Language, three units of study of language, is one of the requirements to receive a Regents Diploma. I think many of the students in this school district come from families who are interested in their education, interested in them receiving a Regents Diploma and going on to college. I think we have a really--considering that we're not in an urban setting--we have quite a competitive school, academically. I think there's a large percent of students go on for further education; therefore, they decide to take this Regents track of study. They have to have three units of language or five units of art, or five units of music--something like that. So we're kind of required for the first three years. (Curric 2:8)



Also, Carl was "very happy with the state mandate, the New York State mandate for communicative curriculum" (Bio 2:2). In a sense, his view of language and language learning were supported at the highest-level of the state, which provided him with needed corroboration within the Department.

For example, according to Carl, the state "mandate" for foreign language programs<sup>1</sup> was instrumental in the choice of this textbook series.

The state mandate is very broad, but it's very communicative. 'I am in a hundred percent agreement with it. It's about functions. This unit, for example, with the sophomores--we just finished a unit on inviting someone to do something with you, declining a request, giving reasons for declining a request, and things like that. Within that basic framework, within that basic function, there is all the grammar that appears, all of the structure that appears, and all of that. (Curric 1:6)

I would say for me personally, particularly in developing a new course--the Québec studies course, for example, that I'm creating--it [state mandate] has a great deal of influence, because I'm able to use that as a guide for creating things. For example, we just finished a unit on Making Invitations, inviting people to do things. So if I can use a communicative theme like Making an Invitation with some kind of cultural content regarding Québec, whether it be shopping, or going to a restaurant, or visiting Montreal, it really works well. So I would say for me personally that is a great resource. (Curric 2:5)

So, that [state mandate] provides a nice framework for me to follow. I would say, generally, many of the textbook series--since New York State is such a big state and there are so many students--many of the textbook series followed that guideline, so that teachers don't--who don't have the time to write their own programs--don't do it. I think this is one of the reasons we have a textbook now. (Curric 2:5)

We have a textbook series we like, which is highly communicative. So that's for the first three years of instruction. We use the textbook series. (Bio 3:5)

The first year program is *Nouveaux Copains*, a Harcourt Brace program. Then *Nous Les Jeunes* is the second year. Third year is *Notre Monde*. We've really liked the textbook. We really like how the chapters are really applicable to the students, things they can actually use, they can reflect upon. You know, how the French live. There are a lot of personal questions and things that can get them active, and get them using the language as much as we possibly can.

Our tracking--since we do track, again for freshmen and sophomores--it does give us the opportunity to review a lot for the so-called slower students. We do a lot of review work, and this is why--with the review work--I've been able to implement a brand new program about Québec. This is the first year of the tenth grade program, which is the second half of French Two. (Curric 1:3)

The state guidelines, in fact, used somewhat different terminology to describe content areas, specifically, functions, situations, topics, and proficiencies. The emphasis, nonetheless, was squarely on communication and on cultural appreciation:

The goals of modern language education in New York State necessitate the development of functional communication in the context of the target language culture, and stress

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<sup>1</sup> Modern Languages for Communication: New York State Syllabus. 1985. University of the State of New York, Albany, NY 12234  
Course of Study in Foreign Languages. French: Checkpoint A. 1987. New York City Board of Education, Division of Curriculum and Instruction. NY





communicative proficiency, understanding, and appreciation of different cultures. (*Modern Languages for Communication*, p. 1)

On the whole, therefore, there appeared to be a great deal of consistency between Carl's conception of linguistic content and cultural content and that of the state mandate. As Carl said:

I'm very happy with the state mandate, the New York State mandate for communicative curriculum. So a lot of the things...I'm real familiar with it, so therefore, I find materials that I think are suitable for the specific level of study. So, if for example, I find an article about a film, it's something that the upper level students could clearly read, but it's something I could ask basic questions about to the younger students. (Bio 2:2)

### *School Administration*

The school administration provided material and logistical support to the Foreign Language Department.

I would say...that we've been able to do pretty much what we've wanted to. When we request a textbook program, when we request certain...when we make requests for the students coming for homestays, and we want to take them on bus trips to different places in the area, they've been supportive. There hasn't been a problem with things like that. When we take a week out of school to go on our homestay program--since it's over two weeks long--they've been really kind in granting us that period of time in order to participate. So I would say that we pretty much get what we ask for. We receive things that we ask for. I would say our results are very good on state exams, on the Advanced Placement exams, and things like that. (Curric 3:6)

Teachers in the Department did not have inordinately heavy teaching loads, in terms of class preparations:

We rarely have more than three courses. We usually have two preparations, three possibly. Now, with my teaching Russian, I have two preparations in French, and one in Russian. I only have four classes a day. (Bio 2:6)

However, in Carl's view, administrators did not really know much about what went on in the Department. In fact, he felt that they perceived foreign language as a subject matter of lesser importance in the school, to the point where the Foreign Language Department was often not consulted on certain school matters, when other departments were. In his estimation, the administrators did not show an "active interest in what's going on in the Department" (Obs 2:16). Any enthusiasm and interest was generated within the Department by the teachers.

The issue for Carl seemed wrapped up with recognition for his efforts and those of the Department. His real source of joy and validation came from June and from students in his classes. Speaking about the Québec curriculum innovation, he described the disinterest he encountered:

There are moments I feel like I'm kind of alone in this, other than June, alone in how I do this and what's going on, and things like that. We do not get a lot of support from the administration. . . . For anything that we're up to. . . . They're not real interested in what's going on. Until I bring it up, nothing will change. I would bring work that I got from, something I had written up the previous night about the 10Rs and the Québec stuff, and spent a couple hours on, and I go into the main office to run off just a few copies. Instead of saying, "Oh what are you doing? What's that all about?" It's, "Oh you're in here again?" So... I get a lot of the joy of what I do back from how I feel about the kids and not from the office. (Obs 2:16)

Thus, while the Department enjoyed freedom and logistical support, foreign language did not have equal status with other subject matters in the eyes of



administrators, nor did foreign language teachers. The upshot was that Carl sought support and validation for his work within the Department, especially from like-minded colleagues, and from students. —

As detailed earlier, Carl viewed foreign language as competitor with other elective subject matters. Beyond the third year, students had no reason to continue their study of foreign languages. The exchange program with France was an attractive feature, as were the University in High School credits and the Advanced Placement examination. Also, the foreign language courses were different, "a course where they can actually get up and speak and walk around and learn different things...not a sedentary course" (Curric 2:9). And, as Carl saw it, "the teacher has a lot to do with it, too. If they like it, if the class is enjoyable, and they're motivated, then they'll take it again" (Curric 2:9). While the advanced level curricula and the academic rewards were not designed explicitly to compete for students, the pressure for enrollment was real:

C: . . . I think it's real important for us to offer that option [college credits and AP], because the students have every choice to do whatever they wish with their schedule. Whatever we can do to create interest in their continuing their language education is certainly to our benefit, I would say.

PM: Because they might opt elsewhere.

C: Oh, yes. And they have.

(Curric 1:9)

Carl constantly stressed the importance of students enjoying the learning experience in foreign language classes. As is apparent, this was a central outcome that he intended in his teaching, critical to students succeeding in his French classes. At the same time, he often linked this view to his perception of the predominant mode of instruction in this school: passivity, sedentary, quiet, and humorless. In fact, Carl went beyond this high school to label "our educational system" in general as fostering passivity in students. In large part, he perceived his French teaching as an attempt to right the balance, especially for those students who had difficulty adapting to the dominant instructional mode.

### *Colleagues*

Colleagues in the Department exerted perhaps the strongest contextual influence on Carl's conceptions of teaching French. Carl and Chuck had been colleagues for all of Carl's twenty-two years in this school. Together, they developed the exchange program with France and collaborated on carrying it out. They worked through the evolutions in the curriculum, from the early Audio Lingual textbooks and the emphasis on grammar, through a period of teacher-created curricula where they and other teachers did not rely on a text but on handouts of their collective creation. Once the exchange program was established ten years ago, the curriculum shifted to preparation for the homestay, and the emphasis on language for communication took hold in the Department. A communicatively based textbook series was selected, one which meshed well with the New York State guidelines. June arrived eight years ago, and established the AP program for Level 5. She and Carl collaborated on the Level 4 and 5 curricula.

Carl was explicit about the "gifts" each of these colleagues brought to him, and about the "bond" and the "closeness" he felt with them. He perceived a shared sense of





mission: a commitment to young people, to helping them succeed, and to feeling positive about French. Because of Chuck's influence, Carl had gradually taken on more extra-curricular responsibilities, such as advisor to the French Club and to the Academic Bowl. At the same time, Chuck and June did hold differing views about language teaching, grammatical and communicative, which created a sort of tension in Carl, but one which served to help him clarify his own views, as well as his responsibility to both colleagues.

### *Community*

Finally, another contextual factor that influenced Carl's conceptions was his view of the people in the town. The exchange program was built upon the participation of students' families. They opened their homes to the French visitors and took part in the many extra-curricular activities during their stay. Carl and the other teachers took time to orient families and to organize their involvement in the success of the program. Carl viewed his "willingness to reach out" as part of his conception that his teaching was more than what happened in the classroom:

I really think--again--as I grow older, as I have more experiences, my willingness to reach out has increased. My willingness to ask for things from the community. My willingness to ask for things from the administration. To get people involved. And to see my teaching as more than my students and four walls of the classroom. I think that's been very important, and it's been a very good lesson for me to see that learning a language has a lot more to do than what we do in a textbook, or what I do with students. That it's important to include the community. (Bio 3:9)

People in this community were strong supporters of education and of their children:

I would say that this community is strongly conservatively middle class, a conservative middle class community. In general, one of the things this community has going for it, in its conservatism, is an interest in children. We have huge parents' nights in this school. I'm really impressed with parents' interest and commitment to their sons and daughters. (Curric 2:9)

Now, after many years, the exchange program had become part of the community understanding or expectation of the Department:

[Students] know about it from the community. They know about it from...Even from their freshman year, they know that the language department has the homestay, whether it be in French or whether it be in Spanish. Oftentimes, they start saving their money when they're young. (Curric 1:9)

Carl's involvement with the community also extended to his personal growth work. As a result of his course work and seminars with two organizations, he had been given instructional responsibilities. During this study, he taught a course to local teachers on personal transformation:

This course I teach is called Redirecting for a Cooperative Classroom, RCC. That's been another way where I've been reaching out more, beyond the walls of the school, and working with teachers--not only in this school district but in other schools--after school. Weekly. To work on how they can enjoy their job a little bit more. (Bio 3:9)

In general, these dimensions of the teaching context supported Carl's conceptions of language as communication, of building relationships through exchange programs, and of collaboration on curriculum.

### **Sources**

Throughout the course of the nine interviews, Carl made various references to key sources to his conceptions of teaching French. Some of these he mentioned more



than once: his personal growth work, his experiences on the exchange programs in France, his relationship with colleagues in the French department. While others were certainly influential sources, I will describe these three.

### *Personal Growth Work*

The importance of this source cannot be understated. Begun in 1989, it amounted to a watershed experience whereby Carl changed his outlook on himself, his students, and on French. More than once he referred to differences in his outlook as "a post-'89 moment" or "a post-'89 thought" (Curric 1:21), or as "Carl five years ago" (Bio 3:14).

In 1989, Carl began his personal growth work, basically as a student in organized courses and seminars, and later as a teacher:

C: . . . I did a weekend, kind of like an intensive. I've done a lot of them. I've trained to teach the course. In fact, it's an intensive seminar: personal growth. What keeps us from being in relationship with people, and what we need to do to gain more closeness with people. Out of that weekend course, I did a lot of training in Texas to lead courses like that. In the same time, there's another organization which is quite closely related to this one, where I've done a lot of work in teaching, specifically, and have offered numerous courses for several hours. They're seven-week courses. After school for several hours, to teachers, about their own self-image, and what they project to students.

It has been really, really useful to me. I think it shows up in how I relate with students, and what they're able to accomplish in the class. Because I see them as one hundred percent capable of doing great things in French.

PM: Yeah, that's a theme that you've mentioned a number of times. Did it make difference for you when you began teaching these courses, as opposed to having just taken them?

C: Yeah. It did make a difference. The importance of practicing what we preach came into play. There are basic themes that run through the course, where how we are--how I am--as a teacher in the classroom, is a perfect mirror for the results that I get. How enthusiastic I am, how empathetic I am, what kind of interest I show toward my subject, and particularly what sort of interest I show in the students as human beings, and as learners. So it made a big difference. (Bio 3:2)

Carl names the source and its influences on his teaching. It was not only his work as a student in these courses, but his teaching them.

I've had the opportunity to teach for the last two years after school about how we relate with students, and how they are really a perfect mirror for how we are in the classroom. I think that's been of enormous benefit to me, that whenever I've had personal concerns, it's been a lot easier for me to leave them at the door. Or when I've had personal concerns, lately to be able to tell the students, "This is what's going on for me. It never has anything to do with you." And to be real honest and up front about what's going on in my life. That has really cleared me to be able to teach more effectively. That has been a major... This happened within the last four years, that I've been involved with a lot of personal growth work. It's had an enormous effect on my teaching, and how I see myself, and thus how I see the students. (Bio 3:2)s

Before 1989, Carl felt a sense of powerlessness, or lack of control:

I didn't see that I had much power in changing things. You know, "Well if it weren't for that teacher, you know, he'd be able to do this." I think I did a lot of blaming, and I did a lot of...comparing. And, I didn't have the sense of myself that I do now. So I think it's more...it's a lot a function of...Frankly, I say it's a function of my own self-esteem. (Bio 1:4)





The interesting aspect of this sea change in Carl's outlook and in his practice is that it really had little to do with French itself, or with teaching French. Rather it was about developing a sense of self, about establishing and maintaining relationships. From these relationships, it is about creating possibilities with one's life. French, as Carl stated categorically, is a "by-product" of his teaching.

Several implications are embedded in this conception. First of all, French is no longer an end in itself, but rather a means to possibilities in students' lives. If students come away with a friendship, an interest in travel, in opera, or a decision to take a risk in their lives, to explore new possibilities, Carl felt that he had been successful.

Secondly, as a by-product, French thus took on a definition that is not grounded exclusively in linguistic or cultural content, but also in "possibilities." Because these possibilities were not therefore defined by language or culture, they were defined by the students, and by Carl. The conception of the "rich tradition of France" was a telling instance of how a film, a play, a comic book, or an opera became possibilities in and of themselves. In other words, it was not necessarily the particular linguistic or cultural content that Carl intended as outcomes, it was the possibilities that these modes of expression offered to students. His exhortation that students might consider going to an opera just to discover what it is all about was an example. He was not interested that they see Carmen per se. No, he was interested that they consider opera as a vital, viable, worthwhile part of their lives. French was no longer part of the picture in this view.

Third, Carl presented himself as subject matter. Even though he saw himself a "guide" to students' learning experiences, by his own learning and integration of "the rich tradition of France" or of Québec, Carl consciously brought his experiences in personal growth into the classroom. One dimension of these experiences was his reformed outlook on his own French:

Lately, I've seen it's all about facility with the language. And increasing vocabulary, and when we don't know how to say something, What can we do to get around it so that we can at least express ourselves? I think my continuing to take a look at my own proficiency really helps the students in doing that. Clearly, I've had to in the past, when my language skills, when my personal proficiency was still evolving. (Bio 2:16)

In the same manner, he represented his relationships with French and Francophone culture, his interests and passions. He explicitly presented his relationship with these aspects of French culture as possibilities for these young people to consider, that they too could make such things possible in their own lives. As he put it, "This stuff can actually happen in your life" (Bio 1:6).

### *Exchange Program Experience*

This began in his college years when he spent his junior year abroad in Caen, France. The language came alive for him then. This experience fueled his teaching, and travel abroad quickly became a part of the foreign language program after he began teaching in the high school. With Chuck and later with June, Carl gradually forged the exchange component into the backbone of the advanced level curriculum, organized and managed by themselves, independent of any organization. Through his homestays and relationships with French people in Evreux, Carl not only



strengthened his language skills and his understanding of the culture, but he fortified his conviction in the importance of language as communication. More important, he developed the idea of relationships and friendships as an outcome of language study.

I really do think that my continuing exposure to culture, whether it be France or whether it be Canada, really contributes to not only my learning--my continuing to perfect my skills--but also my appreciation of the culture. You know, as I mentioned last time, we do at least a trip every other year, and the French come here. So by my spending at least a week with a family, living with a family, it really...helps me to improve language skills, and also my appreciation of the culture. That in turn is a lot of stuff that I can take back to the classroom. (Bio 2:1)

In the year of this study, he transferred all this from the advanced level to the beginning level with his introduction of the Québec curriculum and the exchange program there. This coincided with his own exploration of Francophone culture in Québec, part of his own personal growth efforts to venture out and create new possibilities in his own life. By bringing the language alive to the 10R class, Carl was also carrying out his conviction that these "so-called slower students" could learn French just as well as those in the Honors track. This effort, too, echoed his outlook that all students, as human beings, are "capable of great things," and that they "deserve [his] commitment" to help them "be successful." What's more, he hoped to show other teachers in the Department that the "stigma" of slow-learners really did not apply to these students.

The exchange programs, coupled with encouragement and modeling from June, helped Carl take on the challenge of teaching Level 5 for the first time the previous year. This called for an extra push of preparation on his part, as well as confidence in his abilities to take it on. His experiences on the exchange programs, as well as his ongoing personal involvement in "the grand tradition of France" gave him the boost he needed. However, it was not simply the exchange, it was the homestay situations where he had to speak French:

The early exchange, when we were in Evreux, it was tough at first, because when I was studying in France, when I was in Caen, I had American room mates. Although we were with families, once you have an American room mate, it's just so easy to speak the language. I think it was there, being thrown into the situation where I had to speak French with my host family. A lot of times, it was the host teacher. So, that's where I really learned to improve speaking French. I think the better my understanding became, that had a lot to do with confidence in the classroom, and being willing to take on advanced placement courses, and things like that. (Bio 1:6)

### *Colleagues*

The French language program and curriculum was a collective creation. It resulted from many years of collaboration between Chuck and Carl, and later with June. Key outside influences in their collaboration were the New York State guidelines for Levels 1 through 3, and for the advanced levels, the exchange program with France, the Advanced Placement examination and the University in High School program. When Carl described the curriculum, he almost always said "we":

I really...enjoyed the idea of them benefiting from a program such as this [University in High School], not only on a linguistic level, but for the fact that they can gain college credits for taking the course. It also holds us responsible, that we as teachers know the curriculum, and this is what they have to be able to do by May. This is why I like the New York State Curriculum, where they take the State Exam at the end of the third year, so that everyone in the state is at a certain level by the time the students finish their third year of study--which I think is important. We're given a lot of leeway as to how we present the material, but if we present all the material





the way the state mandates, then they'll do well on the exam. So, in this way, the third year students and fifth year students have large responsibilities, and it's our duty to make sure that they're successful. (Bio 2:11)

Carl characterized the influences as mutual among the three French teachers:

It's really interesting, because I think particularly with my colleagues in French--the other two French teachers in the department--that we have strengths in certain areas of school life. It's only become recently that a lot of this is starting to come together.

One particular colleague is really involved in extra-curricular activities. What he does to create closeness with his students is Honor Society, and the plays, and advisor to particular classes, and things like that. I think the students see him... They respect him a lot because of those activities he's involved in with school. In that regard, it's really helped me to do a lot more than just chairman and a teacher in the classroom. I've taken on other things, knowing that I can handle them, as well, whether it be French Club or advisor to the Academic Bowl team, that I do once a week. It's really been good for me to see that I'm capable of doing other things outside of the classroom. Academically, his knowledge of structure and grammar is very sound, so if I need any help with areas like that, he's usually the most talented one in the department, as far as things like that are concerned.

My other colleague in French has spent a lot of time in France, not only studying there but living there. Her French is fluent, the most fluent non-native speaker I've ever had the pleasure of meeting. She is very interested in curriculum. She does a lot of work with the curriculum, and she does a lot work with the homestay program. She's been a primary influence. Even in this year's program, she's the one who's taking the initiative to organize it this year. I did it the last time, and she's organizing it this time. I totally trust her. I know that she's capable of doing that.

It's interesting. I've gained a lot from one in a more structural, grammatical sense. And in the conversational sense, I've gained a lot from another colleague. In turn, I think that as far as teaching and methodology, that's where they both come to me. You know, like, "What can I do in this class today? What might work in this situation? What's a good theme that I could work on with them to get into a more communicative scenario?" (Bio 3:3)

These descriptions reflect both the "gifts" that Carl and the others offer each other, as well as the shared and divergent views. Both the corroboration and the tension of disagreement served to help Carl define his own views, as discussed earlier in this chapter. For example, his consultations with June prior to the Level 5 changeover in curriculum showed how he incorporated both program curricular needs and his own conceptions of French. Likewise, the Québec curriculum innovation for the 10Rs was very scrupulously fitted within the curriculum and the textbook program, yet it allowed Carl the room to include his own conceptions.



## Summary

### Context

The language programs in the FL Department consisted of two tracks: Honors and Regents. Both groups took the New York State Regents exam after completing Level 3. The state guidelines mandated a communicative curriculum, which the FL Department addressed through a communicatively-based textbook series. Colleagues collaborate on the curriculum decisions and on implementing the exchange programs. Beyond Level 3, the curriculum was based on France and the exchange program the department conducted with a school in Evreux., as well as the Advanced Placement examination and University in High School program. Carl and June had jointly developed and taught these levels. The program was popular in the school. Enrollment in the advanced levels was high. The school and community participated in the homestay exchange program.

### Teacher Roles

Carl viewed his role as that of a guide who structured activities that allowed students to work on their own or in groups on the material, thus placing him in the background. His responsibility was to help students feel successful in his classes, which meant that he needed to set the right atmosphere for learning. This included making class interesting and enjoyable, and making language come alive.

He saw his relationship with students as a critical to developing the mutual trust necessary for working on personal growth topics. He also brought his own experiences, thoughts, and feelings on course content and activities to students as part of establishing this relationship.

### Students

Students were human beings, capable of great things in life. They deserved attention, commitment, and support. They were able to take on responsibility for their learning.

Students were of varying abilities in French. Most would not likely continue their study of French beyond high school or into college. Some did very well, while others had difficulty with language learning, or with schooling in general.

Students were mirrors of Carl's demeanor, and constantly provided him with information on his own attitudes and behavior toward them.

### Language Content

Language content for the first three levels is in large part determined by the Harcourt Brace Jovanovich textbook series. In levels 4 and 5, the content is based on France, with particular emphasis on living with a French family, and comparisons with U.S. culture. The curriculum is communicatively based, and organized around cultural themes.

Carl saw content as threefold: linguistic, cultural, and personal growth. The four skills, grammar, vocabulary, communicative functions, and cultural information (small c and capital C) were the principal components of the curriculum, with an overall emphasis on communication. Personal growth dealt with developing self-esteem and -confidence as a French learner and as a person.

### Activities

Learning activities were systematically organized according to the four skill areas, and presented in a rather predictable sequence, based on a notion of "completion" of material within time periods. There were small group activities and one-on-one exchanges with Carl.

The activities featured student performance in the language, as well as movement, fun, and laughter.

### Outcomes

The overall "intention for them is to leave this school feeling positive about the study of French, or French culture, or French civilization, not necessarily about being stellar language students" (Curric 3:5). Other intentions were for students to develop linguistic proficiency, cultural appreciation, and a confidence in their abilities as learners of French, a willingness to take risks, and an openness to new possibilities in their lives.

*Right on target. I couldn't have put it better myself. This is very much how I feel about teaching. (Epilogue: 5/3/96)*





## Epilogue

I met with Carl in May of the following year to go over his corrections, comments, and reactions to the account, as well as to ask him what had transpired in the interim that he considered significant.

Carl found the account to reflect his views, and aside from a few factual corrections, he had nothing to add, change, or discuss. Early on, he put it succinctly:

There is nothing in here that I would take back or I would say has to be rewritten.

As noted in the account, Carl identified three aspects of the account as "highlights," as particularly significant:

- the importance of creating an atmosphere in class where mistakes were encouraged, as part of his teacher role of fellow learner;
- the summary of Outcomes and the accompanying chart, and the role of personal growth outcomes;
- the final summary chart which summarized his conceptions of each of the dimensions of the conception framework.

After pointing these highlights out, Carl went on to describe what had happened during the sixteen month interim. On the whole, he felt very positive. "I've had a very, very wonderful year," he said.

Nonetheless, there were significant changes.

- The exchange program with the high school in Fontainebleau ended with the retirement of the head teacher counterpart in France. The French teachers decided on a field trip sponsored by an educational travel program for the upcoming year to give them time to establish an exchange with another school in France.
- Carl's like-minded colleague, June, left the high school at the end of last year to pursue graduate studies in psychology. Abby, the new French teacher, was hired and began teaching in September.  

I think the three of us currently work together as a trio better than the three of us before. Who knows why? I think it's a lot of personal shifts. I can't fault Janet. As we grow, we see things that we do to encourage relationships and things we do to discourage them. I see a lot of the things that I do. It's just a process of change. I feel much more supportive of the department this year. I certainly had a tendency to do my own thing, and get really involved with the students and not as involved with the faculty. That's beginning to change. So, it's good. I'm having a wonderful year. (Epilogue: 5/3/96)
- Carl and Chuck were working together on the Level 3 curriculum. This was the first time that they had collaborated on a course for many years.  

Chuck and I worked on this (French 3 curriculum) a lot together. In the past, I used to really... on the positive side, I like to create new material, but on the negative side, I like it my own way. (laughs) He and I have gotten together a lot and worked on this program. We almost do the same thing on the same day, we talk that much together. We do common exams.



Our relationship has grown really a great deal, I think, out of my willingness to not always have it my way, and my desire for him to be successful. In other words, I think it's real easy to blame. It's real easy to say, "If only he were this or that." But I think in emphasizing a lot of the things he does really well, our professional relationship has been really good.

PM: When was the last time you collaborated on a course like this?

With him, I would say 7 or 8 years ago. This has been very important. It's been very good. Again, I think we respect each other's differences. I have a tendency to go very fast, and he is more thorough, but for me it looks real slow. So it's that kind of thing. But the neat thing is that he'll come over and we'll chat about it now, rather than keeping apart. Just trying to help each other out, which I think is really important. (Epilogue: 5/3/96)

- The Québec curriculum that Carl had developed for the 10Rs was now an established part of the 10 R program and was called "Québec Studies." Chuck and Abby were collaborating and organizing the trip to Québec this year, using Carl's curriculum.
- Carl's adaptation of the Level 5 curriculum to the "rich tradition of France" was now established as *La Grande Tradition Française*. It included similar content emphases as in the previous year, such as film, music, opera, drama, and literature.
- The Real World video project was not continued. Instead, students in Carl's French classes had to prepare a final examination based on content areas covered in class. A student-produced video was one option.
- For the French 5 class, Carl added a final project, called *La Langue*, in which students had to create a "500+ original work (written or video) that you will leave as a legacy for future French students to enjoy."

For the most part, however, Carl viewed the events of the interim period as a continuation of a process of personal growth:

Just re-reading this, it just reiterates a lot of how I feel. I can see that this is not a fleeting thing. Everything is a process. These are just beliefs that I hold. It's nice to see how they continue throughout the years, or how they shift and change. Being aware of what things I'm willing to call myself on, what things I think I need to work on. I think once we can say, "Wow, Carl, you can work a little bit more with so-called slow learners this year. That can be a new project. You can work at supporting your department a little bit more, and making them feel better about their jobs." I think as long as we have goals, and we're gentle with ourselves about not beating ourselves up because this isn't going well, and that isn't going well, then I think a lot can be accomplished.

I love what I do. I am so fortunate. This is the best thing. I can't believe I get paid. It's very wonderful. That is it in a nutshell. (Epilogue: 5/3/96)





## CHAPTER FOUR

### FINDINGS

I began this study to find out how three high school French teachers conceived of the French they taught. I anticipated that their conceptions would be connected to other dimensions of their work as teachers in their schools. These anticipated dimensions included teachers' views of students, curriculum, colleagues, and other aspects of work in the schools, as well as teachers' personal histories as French learners and teachers. Almost from the first interview with each teacher, these connections appeared in their descriptions of their French teaching. As the interviews continued, my ongoing analysis of the data showed the complexity of the interconnectedness of their views. This interconnectedness appears as an organizing framework in the narrative accounts and is the central finding of this study.

In this chapter, I will discuss this interconnectedness, and the question of how these teachers organized this interconnectedness, which I contend is through their conceptions of their relationship with students.

#### **Interconnected Dimensions**

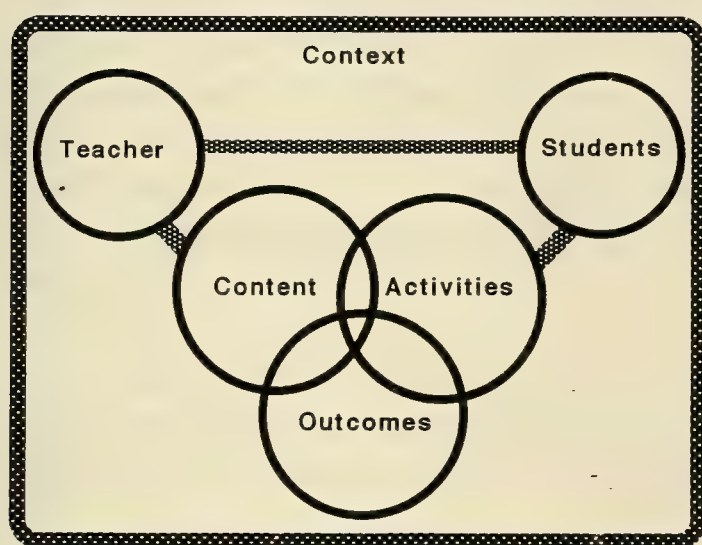
Through grounded analysis, I identified six relevant dimensions that made up these teachers' conceptions of French. These included:

- Context: the situation in which teachers worked, including people, circumstances, and events in the foreign language department, the school, the community, and beyond.
- Students: the persons in teachers' French classes: age, abilities, interests, motivations, roles, responsibilities--in general and specifically in terms of French.
- Content: the subject matter that teachers presented to students, including that which was specifically French, as well as other content areas that teachers considered important.
- Activities: the ways in which teachers asked students to work on or learn the content.



- Outcomes: the intentions and objectives regarding content and activities that teachers held for students.
- Teacher: the roles that teachers saw for themselves in relationship to students, content, activities, and outcomes in this context.

The interconnectedness of these dimensions is illustrated in detail in the narrative accounts and was originally portrayed there through the conceptual framework illustrated below.



*Within the context of the school and Foreign Language Department, the teacher, by playing certain roles, interacts with the students through activities that present the content with intentions of certain outcomes. This dynamic interaction depends on the nature of these dimensions and the interplay between and among them. Together, they represent the teacher's conception of subject matter.*

Figure 38: Conceptual Framework

The triangle unites the dimensions: teacher, students, content, activities, and outcomes, all within context. The overlapping circles of content, activities, and outcomes represent the experience of learning French, the basis for the relationship between the teacher and the students in their school. Teachers and students, in other words, work together on learning French within the realities of the school and language program. The dynamic interaction between and among these dimensions means that they affect one another in the teacher's thinking.

In concrete terms, these three teachers conceived of the French they taught as part of a larger picture, not as a separate entity. To them, French was defined to a great extent by the French curriculum established by the Foreign Language Department, and was thus a reflection of the content, learning activities, and learning goals for the

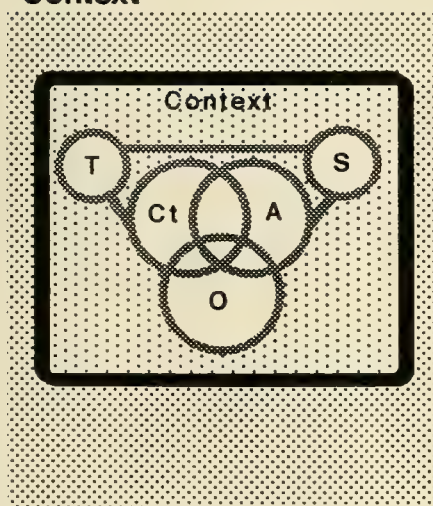




program as a whole, and for particular courses and levels within it. With this, a collective dimension came into play for all teachers, namely, their views of the department, their colleagues there, and their own role and status within it, particularly in terms of decisions on curriculum, materials and textbooks, course assignments, and expectations about teaching methods. Alone in their French classes, teachers had their own interpretations of the departmental curriculum, based on their own personal orientation to French, their background and experiences as both French learners and teachers, and the role French played in their lives and work. These personal orientations affected their choice of content, activities, and outcomes, as well as the teaching roles they chose to enact. These roles were all based on what learning French meant to them, and their sense of purpose as an educator. These roles, in turn, were affected by teachers' views of students, their potential for learning French, and their potential to work with teachers in the ways they needed to in order to learn French. Thus, this larger picture consisted of multiple dimensions, all of which affected teachers' views of the French they taught.

In the following pages, I will describe each dimension separately, identifying key aspects within each that these teachers took into account. This is not to say that all three teachers addressed all aspects in the same way or to the same degree.

## Context



### School

*Perceptions of French study in the school*  
*Status of French compared to other subject matters*  
*Relationships with administrators*  
*Views on the nature of this school*  
*Conceptions of schooling and education in general*

### Department

*Relationships with colleagues*  
*Curriculum*  
*Teachers' status within the department*  
*Authority, influence*

### Beyond

*Community*  
*Connections to other professional bodies*  
*Connections of personal relevance outside school*

Figure 39: Context



Teachers' views of context represent the boundaries within which they work, from classroom to foreign language department to school and beyond to other contexts. These boundaries, as teachers perceived them, helped define the expectations, the possibilities, as well as the limitations for students' learning French in their schools. By extension, such boundaries also helped these teachers define what they needed to address outside the school, including their connections to the community and even farther, to other connections that they perceived as relevant or necessary to their French teaching. All told, these boundaries were the realities that governed teachers' circumstances in the school.

Within all three schools, for example, the overall status of French study there exerted significant influence on teachers' conceptions. French, and other languages for that matter, were elective courses in all three schools, recommended to students going on to college. Beyond this recommendation, language study was largely perceived by administrators and students as of secondary importance, or even as simply "not relevant." Administrators varied in their support and encouragement of the language program, in these teachers' eyes. In all three schools, teachers sought to portray French and learning French as relevant, meaningful, and as a distinct learning experience in comparison with other subject matters.

Teachers' relationships with colleagues in the Department also exerted influence, particularly in terms of the curriculum, course assignments, and expectations regarding teaching methods. The degree of accord or discord between these teachers and their colleagues affected their conceptions of teaching French, as did their perceptions of authority and influence in the Department--theirs and that of colleagues. Teachers also compared themselves with their colleagues, as a means of clarifying and confirming their own views about teaching, or to assess their abilities in French.

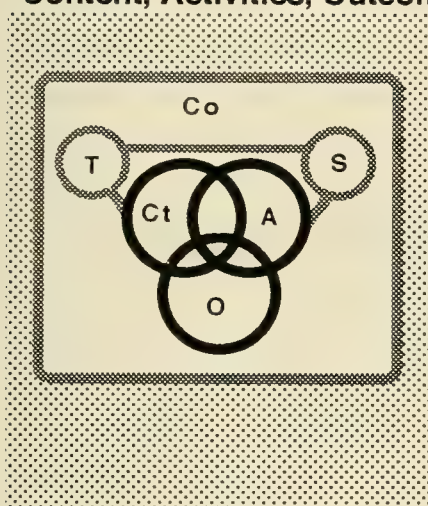
Teachers extended their perceptions beyond the boundaries of their school to include other connections, both official and personal. Instances of official connections included those such as the State requirements for language study in New York that Carl addressed, or the adoption of the proficiency-based curriculum in Molly's department. Personal connections included Susan's established network of language teaching colleagues and other resources outside her school, Carl's involvement in personal growth seminars.





In a very real sense, teachers' conceptions of teaching French were significantly reflected in their views of these contextual elements. Their feelings and stance toward the school and administrators, their colleagues, the department and the language program set the scene. Ongoing tensions and conflicts were part of the picture and these affected teachers' concentration on their French teaching. Susan's struggles with the Guidance counselor around enrollments and scheduling are one instance. Molly's participation in the scheduling and curriculum revision discussions with her colleagues were central to her situation during this study.

### Content, Activities, Outcomes



#### Curriculum

*Textbooks; Materials; Tracks; Levels*

#### Content

*French: grammar, vocabulary, communicative functions, culture; four skills (reading, writing, listening, speaking)*

*non-French-specific: self-expression, personal connections to French, attitudes*

#### Activities

*Features: varied, engaging, interesting, doable, challenging, fun*

*Focus: performance: reading, writing, listening, speaking: the nature of learning French*

#### Outcomes

*Performance in French*

*Progress: working toward proficiency*

*Attitudes: positive outlook on French & learning French*

Figure 40: Content, Activities, Outcomes

Together, content, activities, and outcomes represented the French curriculum. While teachers could describe these dimensions separately, they also tended to group them together as a single entity, using words like curriculum, program, unit, textbook, materials, stuff, level, or track to unite them.

The curriculum was public, consisting of a shared understanding with other teachers in the department, especially in regards to what was to be covered in each year of study. The degree of agreement among fellow teachers on the curriculum influenced each teacher's interpretation of the curriculum to their students, as did the degree of autonomy and control they had over what and how to teach. For example, Carl's consultations with June about the Level 4 and 5 curriculum informed his decisions about revising the Level 5 course in mid-semester. Susan's discussions



about levels with her part-time colleagues led her to clarify her conceptions of the language program she had created, as well as her notion of "organization" of a curriculum. The departmental decision to forego textbooks along with the proficiency-based curriculum re-design affected Molly's choice of content and put additional pressure on her to scramble for materials.

The curriculum was also personal, reflecting each teacher's personal orientations toward French and learning French. To this end, each teacher infused the public curriculum with their own priorities and interests regarding French, as well as their experiences as learners of French and other foreign languages. Carl's connection to the "rich tradition of France" and to Québec both informed his courses for the Level 5 and the 10R courses. Molly brought the importance of students' talking about their own cultural traditions and creating with the language to her course. Susan's interest in art and literature were featured in her courses.

Content involved both views of French and other content that teachers presented to students. French-specific content included areas such as grammar, vocabulary, the four skill areas, communicative functions, and cultural information about French-speaking countries, as well as direct experiences in the culture through travel or exchange. The organization and sequence of these content items was also involved. Other content areas include students' self-expression in French on topics of their choosing, as well as personal connections to the material addressed in class, and work on students' attitudes toward the language and culture, or toward themselves as learners and as persons, quite unrelated to French.

Activities, in these teacher's views, involved features and focus. Features included the particular characteristics of activities in terms of students' engagement and teacher roles. In this light, teachers viewed activities as varied, challenging, doable, interesting, enjoyable, mechanical, student-centered, individual or group-oriented, or in terms of work, time, or as part of an overall sequence such as a unit or theme. Focus involved the content that students were to concentrate in the activity, such as performing the four skills, communicating, creating with the language, working together, playing a game, doing exercises, practicing, or working with materials. Thus, activities reflected teachers' views of what students needed to do in order to learn French at a particular course level, as well as the role teachers needed to play in this process.

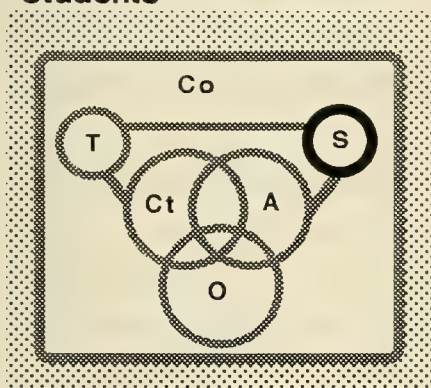




Outcomes consisted of teachers' views of that which students were to achieve in their French classes. Outcomes included performance in French as well as development of attitudes, such as positive feelings toward French and learning French at this particular level, motivation, willingness to risk, acceptance of responsibility. Outcomes were also tempered by teachers' conceptions of students' abilities and the level of their course of study, that is, what teachers thought students were capable of learning.

These three dimensions, as described, overlap and intertwine in teachers' conceptions. Together, they represent the nature of the French learning experience that teachers intended for students. As a whole, they also constitute both the means and substance of teachers' and students' relationship with one another.

## Students



### Persons

*Interests, motivations, age (adults, adolescents, children)*

### Students

*Role in the school and classroom*

*Attitudes toward school, schooling, and learning*

*General abilities and intelligence*

### French learners

*Aptitude for language learning*

*Motivation*

*Level of ability*

*Track within the curriculum*

Figure 41: Students

Teachers' views of students consisted of three broad perspectives: as persons, as students, and as French learners.

Teachers' views of students as persons transcended or underlay, in a sense, their views of them in relation to their roles in the school and as learners of French. Such a perspective included their age, interests, personalities, and their outlooks on life. It also involved teachers' views of the potential rapport that they might establish with these persons in their classes, whether there was compatibility or potential for sharing. For example, Susan spoke of "liking" her students; Carl saw them as "human beings with great potential"; Molly spoke of the importance of a teacher "who can be much more involved with them."



Teachers also saw these persons as students. That is, they saw them in terms of their capacities and abilities to perform the roles of high school students, distinct from their abilities in French. This involved perceptions of students' work in other subject matters and their involvement in school activities, along with students' attitudes toward the school and their experiences there. Teachers' perceptions of the student role also influenced the teacher roles they chose to play. Molly, for example, spoke of her dislike of the adversarial nature of teacher-student relationships that she felt obligated to enact, like "playing cop" in the halls, or of the contrast between lecture-based teachers and her own activity-based teacher role.

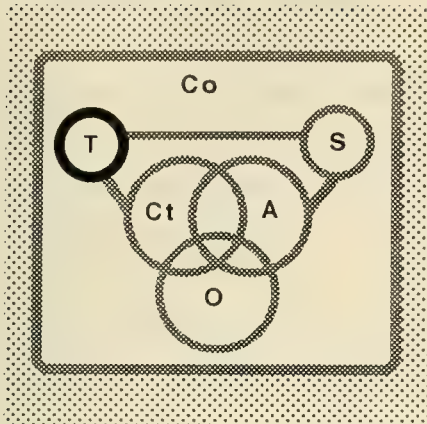
In French class, teachers also viewed students in terms of their potential for learning French in their classes, and of the roles they needed to play as learners in language classes. This boiled down to assessments of students aptitude for language learning, as well as students' interest and motivation in learning French. Based on these perceptions, teachers made various adjustments in content, activities, and outcomes, and they made adjustments in their teacher roles, as well.

For example, all three teachers saw that most of their students were unlikely to continue their French study beyond high school, and their intended outcome of a positive attitude toward French and toward the experience of learning languages was linked in large part to this perception of students. Likewise, teachers' views of how languages were learned involved learner roles. The notion of learning languages as a lifelong process with gradual progress as the important signpost called for certain learner roles. For instance, Susan was explicit in her advice to students that they consciously view themselves as learners engaged in a lifelong process of learning. Carl actively encouraged students to "go for it," to take risks, to not worry about making mistakes. Molly described the importance of students having the opportunity to direct their own learning through a menu of activities.





## Teacher



### As a Person

*Age; outlook on life; career*

### Personal orientation toward French

*learner/practitioner  
background and experiences*

### As a teacher in this school

*roles, duties, expectations  
educational mission*

### As a teacher of French

*model  
conceptions of learning French*

Figure 42: Teacher

As persons, teachers' views reflected their own development and careers, how they saw themselves at this point in their lives. For example, Carl went through a personal growth experience that transformed his outlook on teaching French. Molly was in the process of questioning her role as a teacher in her school and her future career as a French teacher, even to the point of wondering whether she had skipped a developmental stage by entering teaching directly upon graduation from college.

Teachers' views of themselves as learners and teachers of French included their rapport with French and its role in their lives in and outside school, particularly the historical dimensions of this rapport. The nature of this rapport affected the kind of relationship they encouraged their students to develop with French. Susan Winston viewed herself as a language learner, and asked her students to consciously perceive themselves in the same way, especially when interacting with native speakers of French. Molly Evans saw her own use of French as an outfit that she put on for special occasions, distinct from the kind of French she worked on in her classes. Carl Harvey examined the role French played in his own life outside school in order to decide on content for the rich tradition of France in his Level 5 class.

Their conceptions of their roles as a teacher and educator in their schools reflected their view of duties they undertook outside their classroom teaching, the status of French study in the school, as well as the kind of relationship they sought to establish with students within the larger context of the school. For example, all three



teachers sought to portray the study of French as distinct from other subject matters in the school, particularly through the way they conducted their classes.

As teachers of French, teachers viewed themselves as representatives or models of this subject matter, albeit in differing ways. As non-native speakers, all had a perspective on the nature of language learning which they also brought into their classrooms.

To summarize at this point, these teachers' conceptions of the French they teach are connected in intricate and complex ways to other dimensions associated with teaching French in their schools. The narrative accounts portray the intricacy and complexity of this interconnectedness for each teacher.

### **How do these teachers organize their conceptions of the French they teach?**

As I studied the three narrative accounts, I struggled with the question of how teachers organized this interconnectedness. Early on in the analysis, I worked with the interpretation of a dynamic interaction between and among these dimensions. However, this concept fell short of explaining how teachers guided this dynamic interaction. Like other researchers of teachers' subject matter knowledge, I wondered whether certain dimensions dominated teachers' thinking, or more to the point, whether certain connections dominated.

The question that occupied me was this: if these French teachers' conceptions are a complex construct of interconnected conceptions, how do they hold them all together? How do these teachers organize their thinking about teaching French? To answer this question, I returned to the narrative accounts and to the data. I spent a good bit of time trying to puzzle out how teachers viewed the connections among their varied conceptions, looking for signs of emphasis or dominance of certain conceptions or of particular connections among these conceptions. This inquiry was based on the assumption that teachers organized their thinking in terms of the dimensions as I had defined them. While I did find indications that this might be so, these did not fully explain the complexity of teachers' views.

More to the point, I came to understand that these teachers did not seem to describe their thinking about teaching French in terms of dominant conceptions or interconnections between or among dimensions.





This is not to say that teachers did not have priorities or emphases in their conceptions of teaching French. They did. Carl Harvey used the question "What is my purpose?" to orient his thinking, to remind him of his essential purposes as a French teacher: to help students succeed in his classes, to not allow himself to become too concerned with students' performance as opposed to their interest and involvement in the learning experience. In her thinking, Molly Evans started with activities, activities that would be engaging, challenging, meaningful, varied, and fun. Susan Winston thought of providing students with opportunities to constantly perform in French, moving up in a spiral toward functioning correctly in French. But all three teachers had more priorities or emphases than these. In fact, they had many, as the narrative accounts show.

To illustrate, let us examine one aspect of Molly Evan's thinking: the importance of activities in her teaching of French. It is possible to describe Molly Evan's conception of the French she taught as dominated by her avowed orientation to "thinking of activities instead of objectives or outcomes." As her account shows, however, this does not suffice, for Molly had a number of other dominant conceptions:

1. Molly's thinking was also dominated by her attachment to the kinds of activities that especially featured the facilitator role. This role matched her self-image as a teacher, the kind of teacher she preferred to be, a teacher who was satisfied when she could "set up the dominoes and watch them fall."
2. The kinds of activities that Molly chose reflected her educational mission of "do no harm," which was at once a way of conducting herself in her interactions with students, as well as a way of assuring a "pleasant learning experience" for all students. This maxim was also connected to Molly's view that a pleasant learning experience was perhaps the most realistic and worthwhile outcome for most of her students, who would not continue with French beyond high school.
3. Molly constantly stressed "meaningfulness" in her choice of activities and content, reflecting both her perception of what students wanted and her view of what was essential in learning French. She wanted most activities to be meaningful, and tried to avoid the "mechanical" ones. Also, meaningful, in



Molly's eyes, was connected to content, and the importance of students "ownership" of French, i.e. "creating with the language."

4. Not insignificantly, activity-based teaching was the "modus operandi" in the Department, and thus had official status--Molly saw an expectation that she teach in this way.
5. Because there was no textbook for her French course, Molly was expected to identify content as well as activities, which led her to question whether she was presenting all the French that was needed, especially since resource materials were lacking. As a result, Molly's emphasis on finding activities was perhaps easier for her to achieve in this situation, and therefore her preferred starting point. Perhaps.

And the interconnections go on. The point is this: even though Molly did name activities as a dominant dimension, this was interconnected with other dimensions that also had dominance of some sort in her thinking. While she certainly did seem to think of activities first, Molly thought of other dimensions as well. To characterize Molly Evan's conceptions of the French she taught as activity-driven misses the complexity of her thinking.

The same kind of interconnectedness of dimensions appears in Carl Harvey's thinking. Carl's attachment to fostering students' personal growth in his classes certainly dominated his thinking, and he clearly structured content, activities, and outcomes, as well as his teacher roles, accordingly. At the same time, however, Carl sought to make "French come alive" for students through relevant content, engaging activities, and the potential for travel, exchange, and real relationships with students. Also, Carl's thinking was dominated by the importance of encouraging students to just "go for it" in using French, to try it without worrying about making mistakes. While he did say that he put students over French, he also said that French can be within reach of all students.

Susan Winston, for her part, had a clear purpose for French study in her school: to prepare students for college courses in French. This intended outcome was reflected in her curriculum, her emphasis on grammar and her attention to accuracy reflecting her views of the priorities college professors placed on such topics. It is





possible to draw a connection between this dominant outcome and Susan's emphasis on language learning as "serious work" where students needed to constantly perform what they knew through the four skills. However, Susan also recognized that most students simply did not see French as relevant, and that most would very probably not continue with it in college or beyond. Given this view, her emphasis on creating positive attitudes toward French and learning French, a dominant conception, in the hope that they would someday pick it up again really has little to do with college preparation, it would seem. Instead, it would appear to reflect Susan's more general view of the importance of foreign language study as a means to expand one's horizons and learn more about the world, to become an educated person, in effect. This reflected Susan's emphasis on current events, and the history and politics of Francophone countries.

Thus, sorting out the interconnectedness is very much a "complicated endeavor," as Ball (1988) points out. I spent a significant amount of time trying to identify dominant modes in each teacher's conception of teaching French, but inevitably I found myself turning round in the circles described above. Eventually, I came to realize that my efforts to find a dominant conception or dominant sets of interconnections were based on the assumption that these teachers thought of teaching French in terms of dimensions and conceptions of dimensions.

The narrative accounts do show that these teachers can describe their thinking about the French they teach in terms of students, content, activities, outcomes, teacher roles, and context. The accounts also show that all three teachers do name priorities and emphases in their thinking about these dimensions. Nonetheless, even though it is possible to describe their conceptions in terms of dominance or emphases in their thinking, this does not go far enough. The difficulty, I would contend, is that this framework presumes that teachers organize their thinking through these dimensions.

Therefore, while the concept of a dynamic interaction among conceptions of relevant dimensions is a useful framework for examining the interconnectedness in these teachers' thinking, it does not fully explain how teachers organize and guide this interconnectedness. I found that I needed to review the data and the accounts for other clues.



### Toward a theory of interconnectedness: a working relationship

As it turned out, Susan Winston provided an important clue in her comments on the narrative account, when we met to discuss her responses to what I had written. Susan pointed out to me the summary page at the end of the account, where I had juxtaposed all six dimensions in boxes containing summaries of each. Susan commented that this summary, although accurate, really did not describe to her satisfaction her thinking about her French teaching. To illustrate, she showed me a diagram of her own, which she described this way:

*I tried to do something that I thought would be more the way I felt, but I'm not completely happy with this either.*

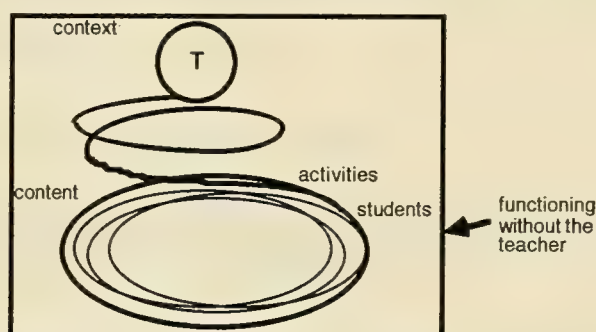


Figure 43: Susan's Conception

*What I did was put the teacher at the top, as the one who directs things. Then I had a coil coming off, because the teacher is really the one who plans the activities and chooses the content, but then it weaves in the students. As it goes around, you grab the activities, you grab the content, then you grab the students. Then you've got a big circle that involves the content, the activities, and the students, and it kind of forms a circle. The teacher can maybe not even be in the circle any more. The teacher can kind of stay out of it and watch this whole thing evolve. I guess I feel a little bit more comfortable with that, but still it's not exactly clear. But that's sort of the idea I wanted to portray, that it wasn't just a relationship where these three were sort of equal. Somebody has to be the catalyst and start off the whole series of events, the chain of events, and maybe even be more responsible for the planning of the content and the activities.*

**PM:** *What about the outcomes?*

*Well, that's what I was trying to get in here (referring to the big circle). I was trying to get the four different skills, and I wasn't sure how to do that. The content determines, the activities determine--if it's a writing activity or a speaking activity, it's going to be a little bit different. Maybe we need more circles here (bottom circle) for activities, I'm not sure. But I would love to have all four skills in here, and then the students really functioning more. It's like water, it gets down here (in the circle at the bottom of the coil) and it all sloshes around. (Int: 5/8/96)*

Susan emphasized that the dimensions of content, activities, and students were not equal in her thinking. Content and activities did "determine" but it was really the circle that she as the teacher created which made everything come together. For





this to happen, Susan needed to be the "catalyst" who set everything up so that students could eventually "function without the teacher."

In effect, Susan portrayed in very concrete terms the "dynamic interaction" that I had posited in my original conceptual framework, but she did not cast it as an interaction of conceptions or of connections between and among them. Instead, she presented it as a relationship that she sought to establish with students to get them working on French. As mentioned, this was among the first clues as to how the teachers themselves saw the connections that I had offered them in my narrative accounts. In fact, when I reviewed the other accounts and the data for all three teachers, I saw the nature of their relationship with students as a critical organizing factor in their conceptions of teaching French.

### **Working Relationship: A Conceptual Framework**

I'm real happy with the relationship that we've developed. I think they know that I mean business, but they also know that I like what I do, and I like them. I think that's the most important thing that we have. [Carl Harvey] (Obs 2:8)

I think that's what makes a class work. I think that the rapport that's established between the teacher and student is probably the first priority. [Carl Harvey] (Obs 3:10)

I think a big part of how I think about my job is my relationship with the kids, and trying to appreciate them, and enjoy them as people. [Molly Evans] (Bio 3:14)

I think it's a lot of things. Like just having children. Being more comfortable with students. Because of experience, knowing what their interests are. Finding out that you need to listen to them. Know what singers they listen to. If you're not interested in what they're interested in, then it's hard some times to really communicate, and to be a good listener and just find out what are their concerns. Then that very often opens the door, and they want to learn better, too. [Susan Winston] (Bio 3:15)

The above statements from teachers indicate the importance of relationship to all three teachers. I found that relationship was a strong organizing concept for Carl Harvey, for Molly Evans, and for Susan Winston. Although the fundamental basis of the relationship, students' learning French in that particular school, was similar, each teacher's conception of relationship differed. These differences reflected each teacher's differing conceptions of the interconnected dimensions.

In reviewing the data, I returned to teachers' conceptions of their roles and their views of students. These two views are quite connected, and together they show the kind of relationship teachers envisioned. In their determination of roles, these



teachers also indicated their stance toward students and toward learning French, as well as what both needed to do in order that the students learn French. These roles allude to the nature of content, activities, and outcomes and also what students' experience needed to be. Also, teachers perceived themselves in relationship with students, particularly in terms of the degree of distance or closeness they saw as desirable or possible.

Juxtaposing these teacher roles and views of students described in the narrative accounts, we can see how the nature of the relationship is suggested. Carl Harvey, for example, sees his students as human beings capable of great things, and his role is to thus serve them, to help them succeed in his French classes. Molly Evans sees students as kids, as fragile eggs who needed respect, not to be crushed, scrambled or messed up, which was connected to her role of nurturer, setter of limits, and model of adult behavior, which was the kind of behavior students needed to display in her activity-based classes. Susan Winston saw her students as nice people with a variety of interests and herself as an interested adult who showed genuine interest in them, and shared some of her own life and interests with them. Obviously, the relationships are much more complex than this, as the accounts show. What I intend to stress here is that teachers' perceptions of their roles and their views of students are linked to their views of the teacher-student relationship.

By re-examining the data through the concept of teacher-student relationship as an organizing concept, I saw that teachers consistently referred to students' learning French using the term "work." Susan Winston was most explicit in this regard:

I think learning should be fun, but at the same time, it has to be taken seriously. It's work. Learning is work, too. Especially a foreign language. It's not something you're going to pick up immediately. You're constantly being called on to perform what you know. (Bio 3:14)

Molly Evans also made consistent reference to work, describing her job as "working with kids" or "working with people." Like Susan, she also referred to learning as work:

I want to hear them play [the Dreidle game] more. I want to hear them get past the roughness of constantly having to look at the paper to know what the French is--you know: take half, or whatever. So I want that to get a little more smooth, so that they'll be doing what I call work, but it won't feel like work.

PM: What do you call work?

Well, learning the French expressions. (Obs 1:2)



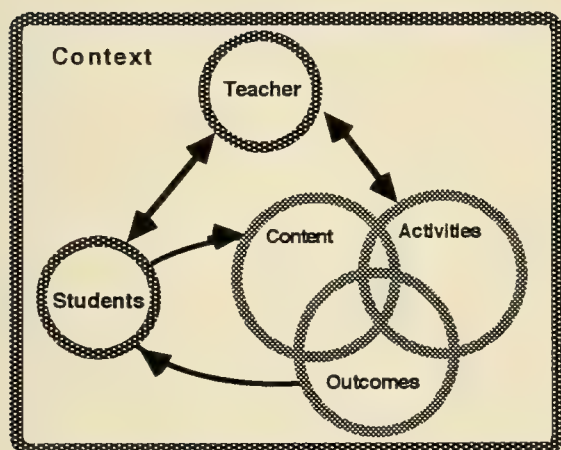


Carl made such references, as well:

I think they know: there's a time to have a good time, and there's a time that we get down to work. (Obs 3:9)

This examination led me to the concept of a "working relationship" between teachers and students. Viewed this way, the teacher-student relationship was not a separate dimension, but instead was grounded within the transaction between the teacher and students.

Specifically, my findings suggest that these teachers conceived of the French they teach as a working relationship with students based on learning French in their school. The nature of this relationship depended on each teacher's conceptions of students, content, activities, outcomes, teacher roles, and context--the school and the people there. These teachers' views of the nature of the work to be accomplished through this relationship, namely, their helping students learn French, brought these varied conceptions together. All three teachers emphasized different dimensions of this working relationship, depending on what they considered important or possible within their schools regarding teaching French.



**Working Relationship**

Within the boundaries of the context, the teacher engages students in the content through activities leading toward certain outcomes as part of the overall working relationship between teacher and students, based on learning French in their particular school.

Figure 44: Working Relationship

The distinction between this version of the conceptual framework and the original is the transformation of "the dynamic interaction between teacher, students, and the other dimensions" to the teacher's conception of a working relationship with students. The teacher engages students in the learning experience, and together they work on the content through activities to achieve certain outcomes within the



boundaries of the context. All of these dimensions are part of the working relationship between them. The teacher organizes and orchestrates it all as a participant in the intended relationship.

This conceptual framework puts the teacher-student relationship at the core of teachers' conceptions of subject matter. This relationship is not an isolated or abstract concept for teachers, but rather is grounded in their conceptions of what it means for them to work together with a particular group of students to help them learn this subject matter. The distinct views that these teachers hold about their subject matter, their roles, about students, curriculum, and the school come together in the conceptual framework of a working relationship.

To conclude this chapter, the primary finding of this study of three high school teachers of French is that their conceptions of French are interconnected with their conceptions of context, of students, of content, activities, outcomes, and of their teacher roles. Also, I propose that these teachers organized this interconnectedness through their conception of a working relationship with students based on learning French in their school.





## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **DISCUSSION**

In this chapter, I review the findings of this study in light of previous research and discuss limitations and implications of this study.

The narrative accounts of Molly Evans, Susan Winston, and Carl Harvey as French teachers in their respective New England high schools portray in detail the complexity and interconnectedness of these teachers' conceptions of the French they teach. These teachers' conceptions of French cannot be separated from their conceptions of the context, the school, the foreign language department and their colleagues there, from their conceptions of curriculum, content, activities, and outcomes, nor from their conceptions of students, nor from their conceptions of their own roles as teachers and representatives of French. It is not clear from this study how these teachers organize this interconnectedness; however, I propose that they organize these complex, interconnected dimensions through their conception of a working relationship with their students based on learning French in their school.

In large part, my findings corroborate the work of other researchers of teachers' subject matter knowledge, described in the Research Context chapter. Like other researchers, I have found that these teachers' knowledge of French is highly personal, idiosyncratic, encompassing not only their cognitive knowledge of and about the subject, but also their personal rapport with it, namely, their perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and values orientations towards French and the social groups they associated with it. Like other researchers, I have also found that these teachers' conceptions of French are bound up with their conceptions of teaching it in their particular schools. Although my definition of the relevant dimensions of teaching differs somewhat from those of other researchers, these differences do not contradict the phenomenon of interconnectedness that other researchers have found, as well.

Researchers' explanations of how teachers organize this interconnectedness have been inconclusive. Few researchers have attempted to explain interconnectedness



from the perspective of teachers' subject matter knowledge. Two who have, McDiarmid and Ball (1989), researchers of mathematics teachers' subject matter knowledge, describe this interconnectedness as "a web" with the relevant dimensions as "strands" which are "interdependent and mutually supportive." To extract any single strand, they concluded, was not possible. My findings corroborate their conclusions: attempts to identify dominant dimensions or dominant connections between or among dimensions were inconclusive.

I have suggested in this study, however, that these three teachers organize their thinking about these various dimensions through their conception of their working relationship with students. The concept of a working relationship implies that the relationship between teacher and student is grounded in the work that they undertake together. The ways in which these teachers defined the work of learning French included the kinds of roles they envisioned for themselves and the students as well as the kind of relationship needed if students were to learn French in their schools. The notion of work therefore suggests that the teacher-student relationship is not separable from the tasks that teacher and student do.

The teacher-student relationship, let alone the notion of a working relationship, has received little explicit attention in research on teachers' subject matter knowledge. Certainly it is implicit in many studies, especially those that explore teachers' conceptions of students and learning; nevertheless, it is not explicitly examined in research on teachers' subject matter knowledge.

Even in those studies that set out to examine the role of teachers' moral purposes of their work with students, conceptions of student-teacher relationships are not explicitly addressed. For the most part, these studies focus on teachers' moral or ethical views of teaching, and of students in particular, with the particular nature of the teacher-student relationship as implicit. The notable exception is the work of Nona Lyons, who in her study of teachers' ethical dilemmas (1990), argued that research on teacher knowledge needs to focus on the interactions between teacher and student. She was quite clear in this regard:

The interactive, intersubjective nature of knowledge presented here reveals the importance of finding ways that move beyond traditional psychological emphases and methods that focus on the individual. We need research that works with the interface between individuals, like teachers and students. The student-teacher relationship, long acknowledged as critical to learning, is remarkably absent from systematic research studies. (p. 177)





Lyons goes on to note that "a needed psychology of the relationships between people is only now in its infancy," and suggested that "good descriptions" are probably the best starting point at this time.

### **Limitations of this study**

This study focused on three teachers, a small population, which necessarily limits the generalizability of the findings. The focus was on these teachers' conceptions of French, yet all three taught another foreign language as well. Two teachers, Molly Evans and Susan Winston, talked about conceptions of both French and Spanish. In some instances, they drew a distinction between the two languages; in others, they seemed to have a single conception for both languages. However, I did not explore this phenomenon in this study, choosing to concentrate solely on French. Teachers of more than one foreign language may have differing conceptions than teachers of just one foreign language.

### **Implications**

The implications of this study fall in three areas: research into teachers' subject matter knowledge, foreign language teacher education, and foreign language education.

#### Research

The implications that relate to research are suggested in the above discussion.

- The complexity and interconnectedness of teachers' conceptions of subject matter needs further study. More research is needed to identify the dimensions of teachers' conceptions, the ways in which they organize these conceptions, and how they developed them.
- Teachers' subject matter knowledge needs to be studied from the perspective of teachers' relationships with students in their classrooms in their schools. As noted, this has been an implicit dimension in research to date. More explicit study of teachers' conceptions of working relationships with students is needed.
- More research on the subject matter of foreign languages is needed in the field of teachers' subject matter knowledge.



### Foreign Language Teacher Education

A fundamental implication of this study is that foreign language teachers' conceptions of subject matter need to be included in teacher education curricula. Teachers' accounts or stories of their conceptions of subject matter can provide points of comparison for prospective and practiced teachers alike. They can illuminate the challenges of practicing and teaching foreign languages that occur both in time and over time, from teachers' immediate situations to the histories behind them. Also, they can provide teacher educators with a better understanding of how to prepare new teachers and to foster change in experienced teachers.

In addition to this general implication, there are a number of other specific implications suggested by the findings of this study.

#### 1. *Personal Orientations toward French*

The personal orientation that these teachers developed with the French language and French-speaking cultures exerted significant influence on their conceptions of teaching it. These orientations, as this study suggests, represent the meaning that non-native teachers make of French in their own lives and work. These began with teachers' initial language learning experiences and continued in idiosyncratic fashion through their careers as French teachers and as practitioners of French, in school as well as outside school. Through their representations of French and of learning French to their students, all three brought aspects of this personal orientation toward French into their teaching.

#### *Implications*

Foreign language teacher educators can help prospective teachers develop and cultivate an ongoing relationship with the foreign language/culture(s). At the very least, this relationship needs to parallel that which teachers are expected to represent to their students. If, for example, teachers are to encourage students to build relationships with native-speakers or engage in analysis and comparison of cultures, they need to have done the same.

At the same time, teachers can be encouraged to develop their own interests in the language/culture, interests that teachers can expand and develop throughout their careers. Such self-sustaining interests can provide teachers





with a deepening perspective not only on the language and culture, but also a personal view on the impact that language study can have on a non-native speaker. Through their own experiences, teachers ultimately have to portray to their students the relevance of learning foreign languages. The more lasting and significant these experiences are to teachers, the more textured the portrait students are likely to receive.

Because of impacts that occur over time as teachers practice and teach foreign languages, teacher educators can elicit and present the stories of experienced teachers and the relationships they have developed with the language and culture over the course of their careers.

Finally, foreign language teacher educators themselves can examine and articulate their own orientations toward the language/culture(s) they teach. Language teacher educators, particularly non-native speakers, portray their own experiences and rapport with the foreign language to prospective teachers. By articulating their personal orientations, they can provide prospective teachers with models to consider in their own development.

## 2. *Personal Curriculum*

These teachers all contributed to their departmental curricula, yet all fashioned their own interpretations of this curriculum, their personal curricula. The departmental curricula and language-related activities constituted a set of expectations. Expectations included elements such as textbooks and other materials, the choice and sequence of content items, assessment tools and procedures--all of which depended on the class level or track. These teachers varied in their support of the departmental curriculum, which affected both their interpretations and the ways that they supplemented it.

### *Implications*

In presenting foreign language curricula and theories of curriculum development, teacher educators can include the concept of teachers' personal curricula. In the same vein, textbook series or other materials can be presented along with practicing teachers' interpretations of them.



Teachers' personal curricula can also be gathered and presented apart from published curricula, as illustrations of teachers' responses to shared challenges in foreign language teaching. These could include curricula that address travel and exchange programs, grammar, vocabulary development, cultural topics, communication. By making teachers' personal curricula available, teachers and teacher educators alike gain greater insight into both the curricular challenges and into teachers' thinking.

In foreign language departments where there is a need to coordinate what students learn in sequential courses, eliciting collaborating teachers' personal curricula can contribute to their collective understanding of the departmental curriculum and to efforts to improve it.

### 3. *The Foreign Language Department*

These teachers' relationships with colleagues in the foreign language department influenced both their conceptions of teaching French and their views of themselves as teachers and practitioners of French. One critical collective departmental task was the development of the language curriculum, the choice of textbooks and materials, the requirements for passing from one level to the next, and the distribution of teaching assignments. The degree of congruence or dissonance in views on curriculum between these teachers and their colleagues affected their French teaching, as did their views of their status and authority within the department. Teachers' feelings of solidarity with colleagues also affected their conceptions of teaching.

#### *Implications*

Foreign language teacher educators can include the social dimension of teachers' conceptions of teaching foreign languages in their presentation of language teaching. They can present the foreign language department as an integral part of the language teaching that goes on in a school, examining the collective dimension as well as the individual dimension. Because foreign language teachers do not work in isolation, prospective teachers need to be prepared to work effectively with colleagues in the language department. Such preparation could include examination of group dynamics, decision-making, planning, conflict resolution, supervision, professional development, and issues of status, and authority.





#### 4. *Professional Development*

At various points in their careers, these teachers all participated in activities that allowed them to develop as French teachers and affected their conceptions of teaching French. These included collaborative projects with colleagues, seminars and courses, travel and exchange, relationships with teachers and others outside the school. Also, the levels that teachers taught in the foreign language curriculum affected the degree of their involvement in French language and culture.

##### *Implications*

Teacher educators can provide opportunities for in-service teachers to reflect on their careers to identify experiences that affected their conceptions of teaching French. By sharing and discussing these experiences, they can gain insight into opportunities or directions to pursue further development.

Teacher educators can also incorporate adult development and teacher career development theory and research in in-service sessions. Prospective teachers can be introduced to these concepts, as well as stories of practicing teachers' careers.

#### 5. *Working Relationships*

This study suggests that these teachers organize their teaching of French, and its interconnected dimensions, through their conceptions of a working relationship with students in their schools.

##### *Implications*

The essential implication is that teachers' working relationship is the organizing factor in their teaching foreign languages. As a result:

- the working relationship subsumes the concept of teacher-student relationship as a separable and distinct dimension of teaching foreign languages.
- the working relationship can be presented as a way of uniting the various topic areas in foreign language teaching education: methodology, learning theory, content, curriculum, assessment, classroom management.



- certain content areas and outcomes can be examined from the perspective of working relationships for insight into the nature of teacher and student roles and rapport required. For example, if students are to make cultural comparisons and hypothesize about cultural values, this implies specific roles and a certain kind of relationship between teacher and students.
- teachers can be encouraged to inquire into the kinds of working relationships they need to develop in order to help students learn foreign languages.

### Foreign Language Education

In Standards for Foreign Language Learning: Preparing for the 21st Century (Phillips, 1996), the profession charts the course for the future of foreign language education. This document puts forth a comprehensive proposal for improving foreign language study in the U.S. It is an important statement of priorities and principles intended to guide the profession into the 21st century. Five goal areas of foreign language study are proposed: communication, cultures, connections, comparisons, and communities--with accompanying statements of standards of achievement. All in all, this statement is a compelling argument for the necessity and attainability of foreign language study for all students in U.S. schools as they enter the next millennium.

I interpret this document as a conception of foreign languages as subject matter. As with other such conceptions in the profession, it represents a thoughtful perspective on what foreign language teachers need to know and do in order that students learn languages. Such conceptions, however appropriate or thorough, make presumptions about these teachers' knowledge, thoughts, and actions--their conceptions of subject matter.

### *Implications*

A central implication of this study is that conceptions such as these, and this one in particular, be expanded to include practicing teachers' conceptions of the foreign languages they teach. In order to advance foreign language education in the U.S.,





the profession needs to understand these teachers' conceptions and take them into account.

When certain proposals from this document are examined in light of the conceptions held by Susan Winston, Molly Evans, and Carl Harvey, the implications are significant. For example, the notion of relevancy constitutes a cornerstone principle in the standards document. As the authors put it: "Regardless of the reason for study, foreign languages have something to offer everyone" (p. 27). In other words, they assume that if students are put in touch with these purposes and if they are given opportunities to direct their own learning, they will learn foreign languages.

Making foreign language study relevant was a priority for all three teachers in this study. The narrative accounts show the variety of strategies they employed to achieve this in their classes and in their departments, and in their schools and communities, but it is worth citing just a few. For these teachers, relevancy was more than simply a transformation of content and outcomes, i.e. making foreign language more communicative, more reflective of the cultures where it is used, and using activities that reflect these changes. These teachers consciously made the learning experience as relevant as possible, to the point where it was enjoyable for students. In fact, for some, a pleasant learning experience was as important as achievement in French, if not moreso. Depending on students' motivation and ability, teachers modified their intended outcomes, from expectations of high performance in French to simply a positive outlook on French and on the experience of learning French. Teachers also needed find relevance for themselves in what and how they taught, as well, a sense of fulfillment or satisfaction in their teaching in order for them to present relevancy to students, and to build a working relationship with students that featured this. Relevancy, as the accounts attest, is a complex and interconnected affair for these teachers.

Clearly, these teacher's conceptions illuminate this and other proposals in the standards document in a very practical, concrete, and inspiring manner. Practicing teachers' conceptions offer a crucial perspective that the foreign language education profession needs to elicit and incorporate.



## **Conclusion**

In its quest to make foreign language learning relevant and attainable for all students, the foreign language education profession has explored a number of important avenues over the past several years. It has moved from the search for the ideal language teaching methodology, to research on the language learner and language acquisition, to reconceptualizations of the subject matter of language and culture. An essential player in this quest is the foreign language teacher, the person who puts all theories into practice. To improve foreign language teaching, we need to understand foreign language teachers. We need to know more about their views of foreign language teaching. The stories of the three teachers in this study are offered to this quest.





## **APPENDIX**

Appendix A: Consent Form

Appendix B: Guiding Questions

Appendix C: Interpretive Time Lines

Appendix D: Classroom Observation Guide

Appendix E: Coding Framework



## Appendix A: Consent Form

### Foreign Language Teachers and their Subject Matter

#### Written Consent Form

I, Patrick Moran, am a doctoral student in Educational Studies at Lesley College, Cambridge, MA. For my dissertation, I propose to carry out a qualitative research project beginning this fall and continuing into the winter months of 1995. In this project I will study non-native foreign language teachers' acquisition of their subject matter. The project will involve tape-recorded interviews with teachers regarding their "personal history" with the subject matter, their teaching materials, and on observations of their classes.

As a participant in this research project, you will have access to your recorded interviews, if you choose. You also have the right to edit or any of your words, as they appear in the final dissertation. Since I cannot now predict all possible developments in this project, I will state that I am committed to granting participants access to my findings, taking into account the rights to confidentiality of other participants. Also, I will hold all information about you in confidentiality, unless you agree to do otherwise. Likewise, if you so choose, all references to you will be anonymous, through use of a pseudonym. Finally, you will be informed of conclusions drawn from the research. You have, nonetheless, the right to refuse direct involvement at any time, without prejudice. Because there is no payment, I hope that you find the process a rewarding one, the research interesting, and the opportunity to reflect on your work of value.

Signed,

Patrick Moran

9 July 1994

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I have read this form and agree to participate in this project on this basis.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_





## Appendix B: Guiding Questions

*excerpted from Analytic Memos, Transcriptions, and Field Notes*

Analytic Memo #3

Friday, 23 Sept 94

12:25 p.m.

Interview Questions: Teachers' Personal Histories with Subject Matter

My purpose in this phase of the inquiry is to get teachers' views on their history with the subject matter. At the outset, I want to concentrate on getting a chronology of experiences and events.

Tell me about your experiences as a learner and a teacher of French.

When did you begin?

What happened?

When did it happen?

How did you get to the point where you are now?

Describe your learning of French at this point in time.

Describe your teaching of French at this point in time.

Secondly, I want to get teachers' views on the significance of these events, and of the relationships among or between them.

Tell me about points along the way that seem important to you.  
What makes them important?

What connections do you see in the experiences you've described?

How do you explain these connections?

Thirdly, I want to get teachers' global views on the subject matter.

When you think about French, what comes to mind?

What does French mean to you?

Fourth, I want teachers' views on the role or impact of their teaching and or learning of other languages.

Describe the role that other languages have played in your experiences as a learner and teacher of French?



## **Appendix B: Guiding Questions**

*excerpted from Analytic Memos, Transcriptions, and Field Notes*

Analytic Memo 5

Thursday, 27 October 94

Topic: Interview Questions for Phase II: Curriculum

What I'm after in this Phase of the inquiry is the teacher's picture of what they are teaching through the curriculum they employ. This means the overall program, the materials for each level, and the different courses, as well as texts, materials, activities that the teacher uses. The intent is to have the teacher talk about documents with me, so that there is something concrete to refer to. The questions will focus first on the overall program of French study and then later move to specific classes that the teacher teaches

### QUESTIONS

Tell me about the French program (course) overall. How does it work?

Tell me about the materials and activities you use at each level.

What do you hope to achieve through this program (course)?

Tell me about the students (in the program (course)).

What do they learn ?

How do you assess their learning?

What are strong points of this program (course)?

What are weak points of this program (course)?

What do you feel confident about teaching in this program (course)?

What do you feel less confident about teaching in this program (course)?

What vision do you have for this program (course)? What could it become?





## Appendix B: Guiding Questions

*excerpted from Analytic Memos, Transcriptions, and Field Notes*

Susan Winston  
Observation 1 Interview  
Field Notes  
9 December 94  
3:30-4:45

Notes entered 5:31 p.m.

Just back from Susan's house, and the first post-observation interview. Basically, I asked her to tell me what she wanted the students to work on during the class, which she did. I then asked about what had gone before in the French III class, and what she planned to do next. Finally, I inquired into the connections she saw among the various emphases.

Carl Harvey  
Observation 2 Interview  
20 December 94  
2:05 - 3:00

### TRANSCRIPTION

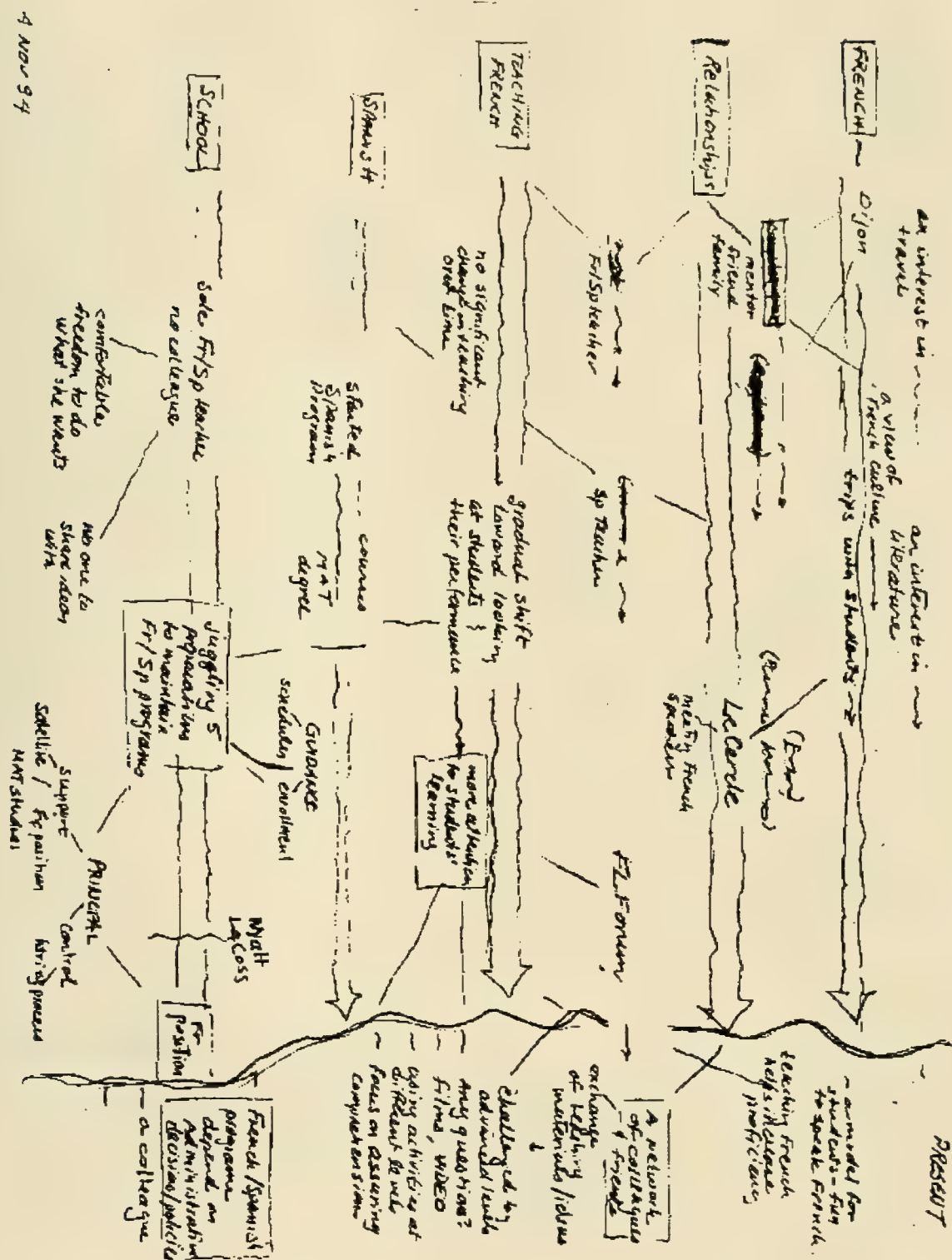
PM: I told you this morning that I changed the format, which is to try to concentrate more on your perceptions of the class, rather than going through my perceptions of your perceptions. This is a change I made with the others, as well, based on the first observation that I did. That's where I'd kind of like to start. I have a few specific questions, based on things that I saw, but my first question would be: from your perspective, what it was you wanted them to focus on, concentrate on, and your perceptions of how they were doing on that, or what you noticed.

Molly Evans  
Observation 1 Interview  
Friday 2 December 94  
3:40 - 4:45

PM: So, that said, my question, to start with, would be just to get your perspective on the class, from the standpoint of what you wanted the students to concentrate on, work on.



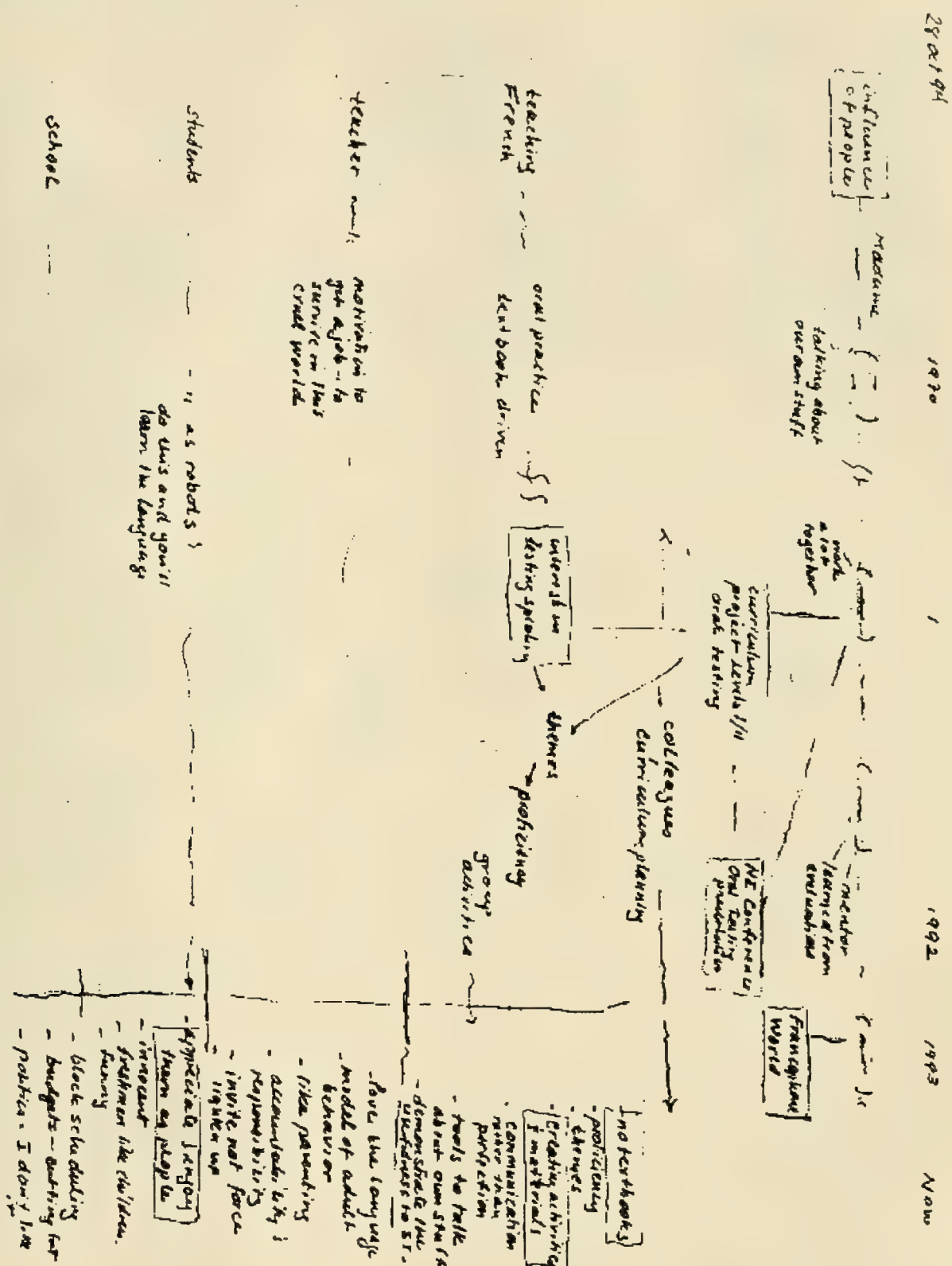
## Appendix C: Interpretive Time Lines





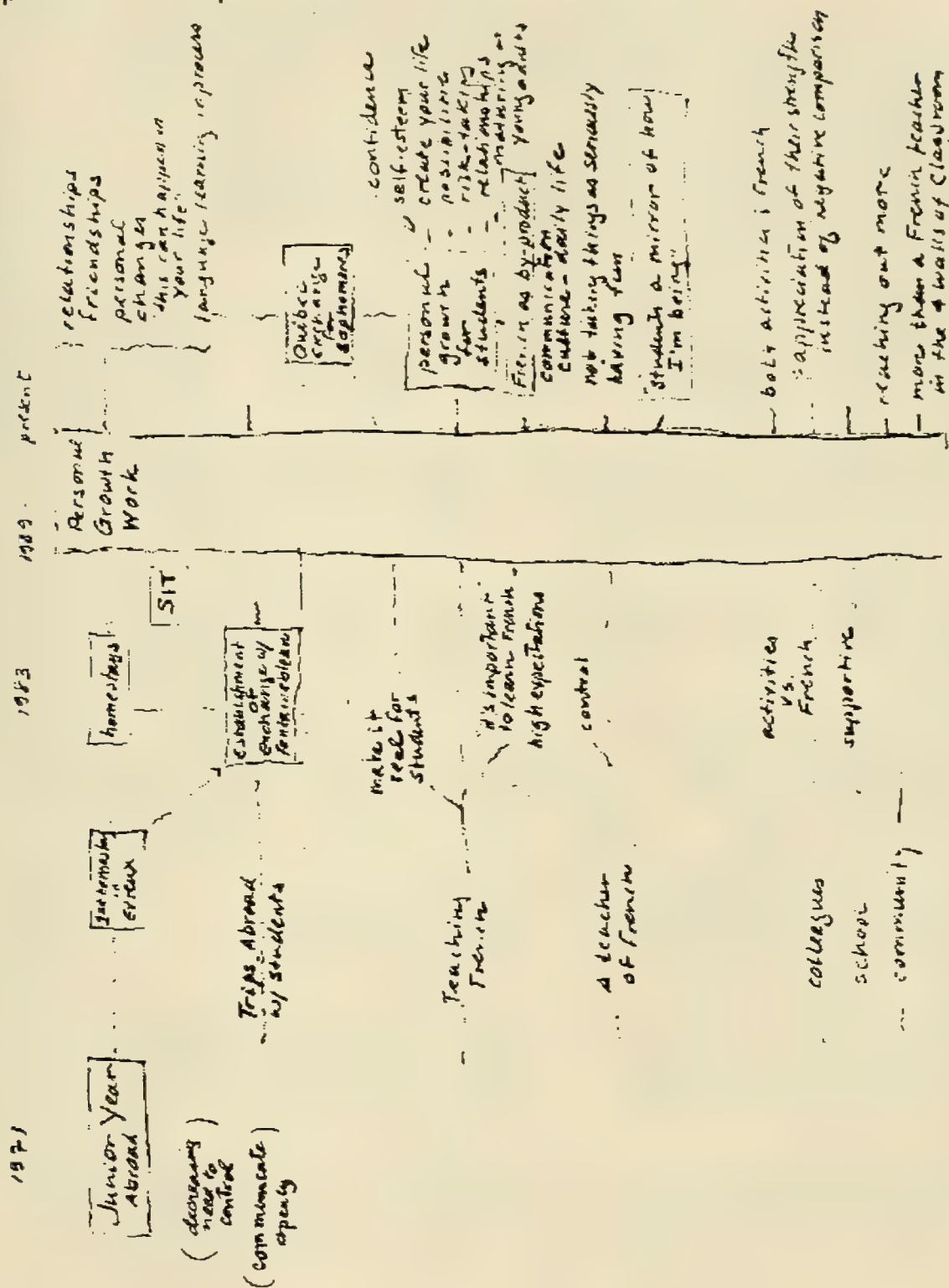


## Appendix C: Interpretive Time Lines





## Appendix C: Interpretive Time Lines







CONTENT	OUTCOMES	ACTIVITY	T ROLE	FRENCH	OUTLOOK	PrsnlHstry/sources	STUDENTS	Nlwrk/colleag	SCHOOL
the more work I so the more I see the importance of making it as real and as true to life as possible B1:2	getting kids up there & develop friendships with Québec B1:2	exchange program with school in France at least 10 years B1:2	when I walk into classroom, I asse that the students are always a perfect mirror for how I'm being B1:2	My h.s French teachers saw I had a natural tendency to learn it B1:1	really saw the need for it in this country a lot of work needed to be done to improved relations and communications by at least trying to speak another L B1:2	junior year abroad B1:1	when I walk into classroom, I asse that the students are always a perfect mirror for how I'm being.. they will reflect back my interests, my enthusiasm, everything that I give them. B1:2	I have a couple of really good friends, colleagues in the department, and we always talked about what is the purpose of what we're doing. I was always the one to learn Fr. Another colleague wanted them to be real active in school, activities. We had these arguments after 20 years, we see that everything is possible B1:9	They start Fr at 6th grade, 20 weeks 6th, 7th, and Level Ones in 8th, and they go right up through the 5th year B1:10
I've redesigned the second year program to be totally about Quebec. looking of materials speaking a lot of Fr to be in tune with the things that ss might like...or use B2:1	my interest in it being more than just learning a language. My interest in helping them to create relationships.. personal contact which makes L come alive B1:2	the more work I so the more I see the importance of making it as real and as true to life as possible B1:2	I see now that my ability to handle my life is directly related to how effective I can be in the classroom B1:5	when I went abroad for the first time, fascinating, so different, so much fun B1:2	my interest in it being more than just learning a language. My interest in helping them to create relationships.. personal contact which makes L come alive B1:2	all the work I've done on myself in recent years, personal work that's helped me increase my self-esteem, is directly reflected in my own classes B1:3	good to have a class a little reticent, AP class like that: what can I do to create self-esteem, empowerment so that when in France maybe Fr not so great but at least a better sense of who they are, by making mistakes, will improve B1:4	Fr. Another colleague wanted them to be real active in school, activities. We had these arguments after 20 years, we see that everything is possible B1:9	one of the nice things about our school is ...would always give us 2 weeks out of school we can have a vacation week plus another week B1:11
the importance of creating friendships, creating some kind of relationship; how can I make the study of L come alive for ss? B2:1	creating confidence, a sense of improving self-esteem through learning language B1:2	Fr comes easily when they're doing, when there's an interest developed B1:6	if I can show them how enthusiastic I am about it and what I see is possible out of it.. letters from friends.. people I know. This stuff can actually happen in your life. B1:6	that's where I began to speak the L better and better B1:2	the more work I so the more I see the importance of making it as real and as true to life as possible B1:2	10th graders but in a 2-year track to do the second year course, a slower version of Level Two. Level Two is advanced, more an honors program			



Lesson Summary		Intermediate French 2 Dec 94 Molly Evans	
9:18 - 9:20	Introductions (including me)	9:56 - 10:43	47
9:20 - 9:30	Calendar activity, birthday song	9:56 - 10:05	(9)
9:30 - 9:56	Simulation of customs	10:05 - 10:16	(11)
		10:16 - 10:43	(27)
		Group 5 on worksheets	
		Group 5 listening to tape	
		Group 5 playing dreidle game	

Activity		Focus	
What teacher did	What students did		
<p><u>Introductions</u> Introduction of visitor to class. Informal discussion of French names. In French</p> <p><u>Calendar Activity</u> The day's date is specified. A student's birthday is signaled. Class sings song: Bon anniversaire. Advent calendar: a card is lifted on the date to reveal the next sentence in a story. The sentence is translated into French and written on butcher paper following previous ones. Above repeated for a second sentence.</p> <p><u>Simulation of Customs</u> Visitor plays role of immigration officer, and teacher customs agent. In groups (each with a name), students bring facsimile passports and go through brief exchanges at each post. Passports are stamped. While each group goes through simulation, other groups prepare to go through, reviewing dialogues practiced in previous class.</p> <p>Write reactions to simulation on act. worksheet.</p> <p><u>Small Group Activities</u> Students are in 5 work groups, ranging in size from 2 to 4 students. The groups work through activities on the menu of activities listed on the board. Activities selected included:</p> <p><u>Grammar worksheet</u> Students do written exercises (photocopied from Amso book), changing verbs to future tense.</p> <p><u>Listening Exercise</u> Students go to the rug in the corner of the room where they listen to sentences in French and name the verb tense: futur or futur proche.</p> <p><u>Dreidle Game</u> Students receive M&amp;M candies, a dreidle, and a handout of rules and French expressions they are to use in playing the game</p>	<p>Spoke in French.</p> <p>Leads class in song.</p> <p>Asks ss to work together in groups to translate.</p> <p>Elicits translation of sentence. Signals grammar points (1 time action or habitual action in past?)</p> <p>Writes it on board.</p> <p>Timmy was so small the farmer stepped right over him.</p> <p>BB: ne pas le remarquer. T elicits word order.</p> <p>(extra e on the end)</p> <p>Identifies order of groups on BB.</p> <p>Invites ss to ask her questions about handout.</p> <p>Distributes activities menu.</p> <p>Plays the role of customs agent.</p> <p>Asks questions based on dialogue from previous class.</p> <p>Circulates from group to group to monitor work or answer questions.</p> <p>To individuals and groups, points out rules.</p> <p>Encourages ss who know to explain to others.</p> <p>Distributes materials.</p>	<p>Listened.</p> <p>Sat in their work groups. Some talked while teacher did.</p> <p>Sing song.</p> <p>1 student reads sentence in English</p> <p>A few students provide translations.</p> <p>Copied sentences from board to their notebooks.</p> <p>Listen</p> <p>Call out answers.</p> <p>Begin work on activities.</p> <p>Review the lines of the dialogue in work groups, on a handout.</p> <p>Do the simulations.</p> <p>Write down their reactions.</p> <p>Work in groups on task. A lot of use of English as they talk about French.</p> <p>Talk in English and write answers.</p> <p>Talk in English and write answers</p> <p>Talk in English and play game.</p>	<p>Setting the tone.</p> <p>Connection of French to ss' lives.</p> <p>Translation.</p> <p>Grammar explanations/rules.</p> <p>Responsibility, accountability for tasks. Independence. Cooperation.</p> <p>Communicative use of language.</p> <p>Anticipation of the French trip and/or an encounter with officials.</p> <p>Responsibility, accountability for tasks. Independence. Cooperation</p> <p>Grammar explanations/rules.</p> <p>Grammar explanations/rules.</p> <p>Fun.</p> <p>Communicative use of language.</p>





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